

*Pavel
Sevostyanov*

Before
the Nazi
Invasion

*Soviet Diplomacy
in September 1939-June 1941*



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS
MOSCOW

Translated from the Russian by *David Skvirsky*
Designed by *Vladimir Solovyov*

Павел Севостьянов
ПЕРЕД ГИТЛЕРОВСКИМ НАШЕСТВИЕМ

Советская дипломатия
в сентябре 1939 г.-июне 1941 г.

На английском языке

REQUEST TO READERS

Progress Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and its design and any suggestions you may have for future publications.

Please send all your comments to 17, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.

© «Политиздат», 1981

English translation © Progress Publishers 1984

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

0802000000—415
C 014(01)—84 29—84

CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Chapter 1. HISTORICAL REALITY AND ITS FALSIFICATION	10
1. Could the Second World War Have Been Prevented?	10
2. "... Let Us Face the Truth Squarely"	23
3. Main Directions and Specifics of Soviet Foreign Policy in the Initial Period of the Second World War	31
4. Ingredients of a Lie	57
Chapter 2. IN THE WEST AND NORTHWEST	68
1. Anxious Month of September 1939	68
2. The USSR and Finland	80
3. Developments in the Baltic	97
Chapter 3. THE USSR'S RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND THE USA	107
1. The USSR and the Anglo-French Coalition After the Outbreak of the Second World War	107
2. From Anti-Sovietism to Planning an Attack on the USSR in the North	117
3. Payment for Anti-Soviet Blindness	125
4. Soviet-British Relations After the Defeat of France	135
5. The Soviet Union and the United States of America	143
Chapter 4. IN THE SOUTHWEST AND THE BALKANS	155
1. Troublesome Relations with Romania	156
2. The USSR and Bulgaria	172
3. The USSR and Hungary	181
4. The USSR and Yugoslavia	187
Chapter 5. IN THE SOUTH	194
1. The USSR and Turkey	194
2. The USSR and Iran	205
3. The USSR and Afghanistan	212
Chapter 6. IN THE EAST	219
1. Military and Political Situation in the Far East	220

	2. The USSR and Japan: Negotiations, 1939-1940 . . .	227
	3. Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact	237
	4. Soviet Assistance to the Chinese People	242
Chapter	7. RELATIONS WITH GERMANY AND ITALY . . .	248
	1. Latent Conflict With Germany During the "Phoney War" in Europe	248
	2. Bilateral Relations with Germany: Trade and Economic Aspects	261
	3. The Nazi Threat Grows	267
	4. Soviet-German Political Confrontation in November 1940	270
	5. The USSR and Italy	282
	6. Last Months Without War: Opportunities for Diplomacy Narrow Down	288
Conclusion		299

FOREWORD

The Second World War began on September 1, 1939, with nazi Germany's invasion of Poland. The outbreak of war was preceded by a nazi provocation code-named "Himmler" and orchestrated along lines typical of fascist methods of misleading public opinion. In the early hours of September 1 SS-men, dressed in Polish military uniforms, seized the radio station in the small town of Gliwice, situated near the German-Polish frontier of the time, and exchanged fire with the German police. Several corpses in Polish uniforms were left near the radio station as evidence. These were the corpses of German convicts shot by the nazis. The *casus belli* was thus engineered.

At 04.45 hours on September 1 nazi aircraft attacked aerodromes, communication junctions, and economic and administrative centres in Poland. The battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*, that had arrived earlier at the Polish coast, shelled installations on the Westerplatte peninsula. German land forces crossed into Poland.

The Second World War thus provoked bore out Lenin's words that war "is the continuation, by violent means, of the policies pursued by the ruling classes of the belligerent powers long before the outbreak of war"¹ and that the "policies which they were

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Peace Programme", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 163.

Here and further on the quotations of Lenin are taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow (English-language edition), unless otherwise indicated.

pursuing for decades before the war, should be studied and grasped in their entirety".¹ History knew of longer wars, but never had a war brought such enormous casualties and destruction. It consumed more than 50 million lives. In Europe alone over twice as many people were killed as in the preceding 350 years. Fighting took place on the territory of 40 countries. Sixty-one nations with an aggregate population of 1,700 million were involved.

The fascist Axis powers were defeated and humankind was spared enslavement at the cost of colossal human losses and an enormous outlay of resources, by the Soviet Union in the first place. "It was a difficult, very difficult time," the Soviet leadership pointed out. "It is receding ever farther away from us, but for the Soviet people what occurred in those years will never become cold history. Those deeds are part of our worldview, an everlasting example of selfless heroism and dedication for the generations entering life."²

Less than 22 months, a short period in terms of history, separate September 1, 1939, from the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people. But this was one of the most complex periods experienced by the USSR after the Great October Socialist Revolution. Apart from the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty in 1918, it would be hard to specify a span of time when the international situation placed such an unprecedented responsibility on Soviet foreign policy. Hence the magnitude of the tasks that had to be tackled by Soviet diplomacy. "Acting in an exceptionally complex situation, in conditions of constant threat of attack from without and anti-Soviet provocations, especially after the nazis had seized power in Germany, our country displayed rigid restraint and commitment to principle, combining firmness in the defence of its state interests and the cause of peace with flexibility and realism. The chronicle of Soviet foreign policy is full of moving pages telling of the courage and staunchness of Soviet diplomats, those envoys of the Soviet people who pursued the Party's line skilfully, with a high sense of responsibility, and

¹ V. I. Lenin, "War and Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, 1974, p. 402.

² *Pravda*, November 12, 1978.

displayed unfaltering devotion to the ideals of communism."¹

To have a better and fuller idea of what was accomplished by the Soviet people, it is worthwhile reviewing the immediate prehistory of the Great Patriotic War. More, this will help us to understand how much the victory over the fascist aggressors influenced and still influences the entire course of postwar development. This victory, in whose attainment the decisive role was played by the USSR, consolidated the world status of the Soviet Union, enhancing its international influence and prestige. The defeat of imperialism's most reactionary forces provided the impetus for a further acceleration of the world revolutionary process. People's democratic and socialist revolutions took place in some countries in Europe and Asia. A world socialist system emerged. Moreover, the defeat of nazi Germany and its satellites, as well as of militarist Japan, powerfully stimulated the national liberation struggle of the peoples of colonial and dependent countries. In a situation witnessing a significant weakening of the capitalist system and a rapid development of the USSR and other socialist countries, this movement, which had the active support of the international communist movement, smashed imperialism's colonial system.

The growth of the might of the USSR and of the socialist community as a whole, the further development of the world revolutionary process, and the deepening of capitalism's general crisis fundamentally changed the world balance of power in favour of socialism, in favour of the forces fighting for peace, freedom, and independence.

This book is an attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the international situation and of the general conception and concrete principles, character, forms, and methods of the struggle waged by Soviet diplomacy to win security and improve the external conditions for building socialism and upgrading the USSR's defence capability in the period from September 1, 1939, to June 22, 1941. With this purpose in view it analyses the USSR's relations with those countries whose policy most intimately affected its international interests: with imperialist powers—Germany, Britain, France (until its surrender), the USA,

¹ A. A. Gromyko, *In the Name of the Triumph of the Leninist Foreign Policy. Selected Speeches and Articles*, Moscow, 1978, p. 584 (in Russian).

Japan, and Italy; with its neighbours—Finland, Poland (prior to its defeat), Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran, and with Yugoslavia, and China.

The fundamental principles and aims of Soviet foreign policy of the period, of the efforts of Soviet diplomacy to implement them, and the orientations and content of its practical activity are spelled out clearly in documents of the CPSU and the Soviet government and in the statements made by Soviet leaders. These have been researched in some fundamental Soviet publications brought out in recent years.¹ Questions related to Soviet foreign policy during the last prewar years have long had the close attention of Soviet historiography and have been studied by eminent Soviet historians.

Soviet foreign policy in the initial period of the Second World War can be studied comprehensively only on the basis of the considerable research that has been conducted by Soviet historians. Also, such a study requires the use of new materials and documents.

The scientific basis of this book consists chiefly of documents from the Soviet Foreign Policy Archives of the USSR Ministry for Foreign Affairs and documentary sources published in Russian and other languages. Wide use has been made of documents and other materials relating to diplomatic contacts of Soviet statesmen and high-ranking officials of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade of the USSR, and also of documents dealing with the USSR's bilateral relations with Germany, Britain, the USA, France, Italy, Japan, Finland, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Iran, Afghanistan, Sweden, Norway, and other countries.

The author has tried to show how much was done by Soviet foreign policy and its diplomatic service to enable the USSR to join issue with the fascist aggressors under conditions favour-

able to it, the magnitude and nature of the innumerable impediments that Soviet diplomacy had to surmount on the international scene of that period, vigorously countering anti-Soviet actions of the two imperialist groups and also other countries.

The topicality of this work is due, in particular, to the circumstance that the problems facing Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941 are the subject of the still ongoing acute ideological struggle. Bourgeois historiography and the political ideology of present-day imperialism have elaborated and actively use not merely a series of false theses about Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941 but a whole system of falsifications that has entered most of the products of bourgeois historians and political writers. These are by no means abstract academic falsifications. Imperialism sees them as a major weapon of its ideological arsenal. In terms of the viciousness and dimension of the pseudo-scientific falsehoods that have been piled up in the West about the Soviet Union's foreign policy actions in 1939-1941, this period of Soviet foreign policy has, perhaps, no equal in fueling the attempts of bourgeois ideology to smear the history of the Soviet Union.

To expose all these falsehoods by means of the Marxist-Leninist historical method is a pressing practical task in the ideological struggle today.

Research into Soviet foreign policy of the initial period of the Second World War is important in both the scientific and political contexts, especially today when the Soviet Union, the world socialist community as a whole, and all other peace-loving nations and socio-political forces are doing everything to make detente a dominant trend in relations between countries. The attempts by US imperialism's aggressive circles to talk again with the USSR in the cold war language and their efforts to activate the dangerous contest in developing ever more destructive means of warfare brought about a considerable deterioration of the international climate at the close of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.

The lessons of 1939-1941 help us to get a clearer insight into the consequences of this policy, and make for a better understanding of the epochal significance of the Soviet Union's consistent course towards peace, detente, and disarmament.

¹ For example, *A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 5th, enlarged edition, Moscow, 1980; *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1980* in two volumes, 4th, revised and enlarged edition, Moscow, 1980-1981; *A History of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, *Diplomacy During the Second World War*, Moscow, 1975; *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974 (all in Russian).

Chapter 1 HISTORICAL REALITY AND ITS FALSIFICATION

1. COULD THE SECOND WORLD WAR HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

Klaus Knorr and Oscar Morgenstern, the American experts in foreign policy planning and forecasting, made an attempt to generalise the principal international events of the 20th century to whose advent the US political leadership had been blind 15 years before they became realities. Topping their list are: the revival of German militarism, the strengthening of Japan as an aggressive military power and, lastly, the Second World War.¹ This time span in measuring official Washington's lack of foresight is more than questionable, but the raising of this question is not purposeless. If we take a wider look, we shall see that not only Washington but also London and Paris demonstrated an incredible reluctance to understand the reality of the growing military threat in the period between the two world wars. The long-term prospect for international developments was seen differently only in Moscow.

LENIN'S PREVISION OF MILITARY CATAclysms

The outbreak of the Second World War did not come as a surprise to the CPSU and the Soviet government. The understanding that the international relations of the period between the two wars were volatile and that war could be kindled by the forces of aggression underlay the planning and practical steps

¹ I. Sevostyan, *Foreign Policy Planning in the USA. Some Questions of Theory, Practice, and Organisation*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 159-60 (in Russian).

of Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s and the 1930s. Repeatedly noting the possibility of new military conflicts of regional and global dimensions the founder of the foreign policy of the world's first socialist state, Vladimir Lenin, stressed that the outwardly strong alliances and coalitions of the leading capitalist states could turn out to be short-lived and that peaceful ways of settling inter-imperialist contradictions would be superseded by military means.

Mindful of this prevision of Lenin's, the CPSU held that future military cataclysms would be a most serious external threat to socialism's achievements in the USSR because were a war to break out it would inevitably involve the Soviet Union by virtue of the existing alignment and correlation of class forces in the world. As Lenin pointed out, "in the present world situation following the imperialist war, reciprocal relations between peoples and the world political system as a whole are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states headed by Soviet Russia".¹ He foresaw that at times this struggle could grow so acute that it would erupt into an armed assault by capitalism, and therefore warned: "We must remember that we are always a hair's breadth away from invasion."²

After Hitler came to power, practically all Soviet assessments of the international situation boiled down to the premise that nazi Germany was the main source of the war danger in Europe. This was stated unequivocally in early 1934 at the 17th Congress of the CPSU(B).³ It was then that the extremely important theoretical and practical conclusion was drawn: inter-imperialist contradictions had reached a point paving the way for military conflicts and placing war on the agenda as a means for a new redivision of the world and spheres of influence in favour of the stronger nations.

This conclusion—an indicator of the soundness of the scientific

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1974, p. 241.

² V. I. Lenin, "Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets", *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, 1976, p. 148.

³ The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) from December 1925 to October 1952. (Further on is mentioned as the CPSU.)—Tr.

prevision of Marxist-Leninist thought—was adopted and further developed by the international communist and working-class movement. "German fascism is the main instigator of a new imperialist war and comes forward as the *shock troop of international counter-revolution*,"¹ stated the resolution of the VII Congress of the Comintern (summer 1935). The nazis, the same resolution declared, "who strive for the hegemony of German imperialism in Europe, raise the question of changing the boundaries of Europe at the expense of their neighbours by means of war".²

The Soviet Union had from the very outset begun a struggle against the growing military threat in Europe and Asia, when the seeds of this threat were only emerging, and it was the only world power that conducted this struggle consistently and honestly. As early as February 6, 1933, at the disarmament conference held at the time, the Soviet Union proposed the draft of a declaration defining aggression. This draft won wide recognition in the world, but Britain took a negative stand towards it.

The very first major foreign policy action of the nazis gave a clear indication of their intentions. On October 14, 1933, the German delegation walked out of the disarmament conference, and five days later Germany withdrew from the League of Nations. Promptly, on December 12, 1933, the CPSU Central Committee passed a decision to launch a campaign for collective security. On December 20 the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee endorsed a document of the USSR People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on the practical steps to be taken to form a system of security in Europe. This document stated: "The USSR has no objection to concluding, within the framework of the League of Nations, a regional agreement on mutual defence against aggression by Germany." In addition to the USSR the signatories of this agreement were to be Belgium, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland.³

¹ VII Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 1939, p. 572.

² Ibid., p. 588.

³ Soviet Foreign Policy Documents, Vol. 16, Moscow, 1970, p. 876 (in Russian).

The policy of regional pacts differed fundamentally from the policy of alliances, because the military alliances of the imperialist powers were agreements between one group directed against another, while a regional pact spelled collective efforts to ensure peace in a specific region and presented no threat to anybody. This was a pact of peace, not of war.¹

Soviet diplomacy sought to bring the idea of collective security to materialisation in various forms—adapted both to the European and the Asian seats of the war danger. On November 27, 1937, the USSR People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs M.M. Litvinov declared: "On all suitable occasions, even when the interests of the Soviet Union were not affected at all, we have emphasised our readiness to participate, on an equal footing with other big and also small powers, in a collective rebuff to an aggressor. But the collective for a rebuff does not yet exist."²

The efforts to organise a collective rebuff to aggression, seen by the USSR as the most effective way of averting war, were supplemented—in those few cases when other countries displayed a willingness to participate—with bilateral measures. In 1935–1937 the USSR signed treaties on joint defensive actions against aggression with France and Czechoslovakia, and a non-aggression pact with China. At the same time, enormous political work was being done to expose the forces of aggression, all acts of aggression were denounced, and support was extended to victims of aggression to help them uphold their freedom and independence.

PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION: INCOMPATIBILITY OF TWO STRATEGIES

In the 1930s, in contrast to the Soviet idea of forming a coalition of nations to prevent war, the Western nations pursued a policy, in which their immediate security was overshadowed by higher class aims. These aims were to avoid war between the leading imperialist states, divert from themselves the claims of

¹ V. Y. Sipols, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1933–1935*, Moscow, 1980, p. 151 (in Russian).

² *Pravda*, November 29, 1937.

the nazis in Europe and of militarist Japan in Asia, direct the aggressor powers against the USSR, and thereby settle the growing inter-imperialist contradictions at the expense of the USSR and also of China and small European nations, and by means of a mutually acceptable compromise on colonial possessions. Thus they hoped to consolidate the imperialist system and return the world to the situation that existed prior to the Great October Socialist Revolution.

In the final analysis this explains Britain's, France's, and the USA's unprecedented indulgence as regards aggression, their reluctance to see the growth and extension of the threat of war, their striving "not to interfere", to avoid using real sanctions, let alone military force against the aggressive powers, and their readiness to "appease" these powers.

Since these aims squared with the anti-communist and anti-Soviet trends in the policies pursued by Germany, Italy, and Japan, the Western powers felt they could allow the continual buildup of the might of these countries and connive at their efforts to demolish the entire structure of international relations that had taken shape after the First World War. "The imperialists of the USA, Britain, and France," said Leonid Brezhnev, "did much to revive German militarism after the First World War and direct it against the Soviet Union. And when Hitler came to power with the help of the German monopolies and openly proclaimed a course towards war, the Western powers engaged in 'appeasing' the aggressor. They threw more and more victims to Hitler, cherishing the hope that he would move his hordes to the East, against the socialist country. The Munich collusion, which gave Czechoslovakia to nazi Germany, was the most disgraceful manifestation of this perfidious design of the imperialists."¹

The nazis wasted no time to prepare for "total" war. On March 13, 1935, Germany renounced the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty, which forbade it to have an air force. Three days later Germany introduced universal military service. Instead of reacting resolutely, Britain used the pretext of "controlling German armaments" to voluntarily open a new

channel for the nazis to build up their military strength, namely, a navy. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 permitted Germany to increase its navy substantially.

In September 1936 Hitler announced that he would have a battleworthy army within four years. The German economy was to be prepared for war in that period. Germany increased the number of its divisions from 31 in 1935 to 102 in the autumn of 1939. In seven prewar years, the Wehrmacht's numerical strength grew from 105,000 to 3,755,000 officers and men, in other words, it increased more than 35-fold. In 1934 Germany produced 840 aircraft, whereas in 1936 it manufactured 4,733.¹ On the whole, between 1933 and 1939, military production registered a ten-fold increase.

Germany could not have maintained this growth rate had it not received US and British loans for the buildup of its military potential. Germany purchased abroad military equipment and weapons, including what for those years were first-class aircraft engines. The Heinkel and Focke-Wulf factories and the Thyssen, Krupp, and IG Farbenindustrie military-industrial complexes received the most up-to-date military technology. As a result of the alliance between the German monopolies and foreign capital during the prewar years Germany was able to build a large military-industrial base and create powerful modern armed forces. Investments amounting to nearly 1,000 million dollars were transferred to Germany from the USA and Britain shortly before the war. The Soviet historian N.N. Yakovlev writes: "By 1939 the feverish arms race had strained the German economy to the limit, and foreign trade had been put into a precarious position on account of the rapid stockpiling of strategic raw and other materials. Any step to reduce their import could threaten the nazi Reich with catastrophe. The West had the necessary leverage in its hands. On the eve of the war Germany was getting about 50 per cent of the raw and other materials vital to its war economy from Britain, France, the USA, and the territories controlled by them."²

Hitler opened his record of using military force for foreign

¹ *Pravda*, August 31, 1979.

² N. N. Yakovlev, "The Year 1939: A View 40 Years Later", *Voprosy istorii*, No. 8, 1979, p. 10.

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1970, p. 122 (in Russian).

policy purposes in March 1936 with the occupation of the demilitarised Rhine region. In the League of Nations the USSR at once proposed collective sanctions against the aggressor. Britain and France opposed this move, demonstrating Western tractability in territorial matters, greatly impressing Nazi Berlin and stimulating its self-assurance. The expansionist nature of Nazi Germany's policies and its striving to become the rallying centre of the most reactionary militarist forces were seen clearly in the Anti-Comintern Pact signed in 1936 and the formation of the German-Italian-Japanese military and political axis. After the fascist coalition had been formed hotbeds of war ready to develop into a world conflagration began to appear in Europe and Asia.

As the Second World War drew nearer it was becoming increasingly obvious that, with the exception of the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic, no country was making consistent efforts to prevent a military cataclysm. But there was another obvious development—the Western policy of “appeasement” was, more than anything else, perhaps, encouraging the aggressive nations to unleash that war.

Despite extremely unfavourable geographical conditions the Soviet Union was the only country that gave tangible assistance to Republican Spain, where a fascist mutiny staged with German and Italian backing broke out in July 1936. Francisco Franco soon had 150,000 Italians, 50,000 Germans, and the best that could be provided by the Nazi air force fighting on his side. In Spain Soviet volunteers clashed with the Nazis on the battlefield for the first time. The policy of “non-interference” and “neutrality” proclaimed by Britain, France, and the USA in fact meant support for the Franco forces.

In Asia, the USSR took a vigorous stand against the predatory plans of the Japanese militarists. There it acted jointly with Mongolia. Britain and the USA refused to accept the Soviet offer, made in 1933, to sign a Pacific Pact as a collective barrier to Japanese expansionism. No Western power joined the USSR to help China, which became the target of Japanese aggression in the summer of 1937. The USSR gave China large credits and armaments. A significant part in helping China was played by Soviet volunteer military experts. Meanwhile, at the Brussels Conference convened in November 1937 specifically to consider

the situation in East Asia, the USA and Britain secured the rejection of the Soviet proposals for collective sanctions by the League of Nations against Japan.

After Neville Chamberlain became Britain's Prime Minister in May 1937, a new element appeared in the Western policy of “appeasing” aggressors. This was the quest for all-embracing mutual understanding with Germany and the intention to give it a free hand in Central and Eastern Europe; it was evident that German expansion was being channeled in the direction of the USSR. Herbert von Dirksen, who was the German ambassador to Britain, wrote that the British government had “come nearer to understanding the most essential points of the major demands advanced by Germany, with respect to excluding the Soviet Union from the decision of the destinies of Europe, the League of Nations likewise, and the advisability of bilateral negotiations and treaties”.¹

At talks with Hitler in November 1937, Lord Halifax clearly voiced Britain's readiness to agree to a recarving of Europe's political map in favour of Germany, in particular to satisfy its claims to Austria, Danzig (Gdansk), and Czechoslovakia provided these claims were realised gradually. It was implied that Hitler would guarantee the intactness of the British colonial empire. The results of the Halifax-Hitler talks were endorsed by the French government. Hitler evaded giving a specific reply. In Berlin they saw the main thing, namely, that German expansion in Central and Eastern Europe would encounter no resistance from the most powerful Western countries.

On March 12, 1938, the Nazis marched into Austria. Once again the USSR was the only power to denounce resolutely this aggression. Moscow took a very serious view of the “*anschluss*”. This was the first time since the end of the First World War that a country, whose independence was guaranteed by Britain and France under the Saint-Germain Treaty of 1919, had disappeared from the political map of Europe. “The seizure of Austria,” the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs wrote in a letter to the CPSU Central Committee on March 14, 1938,

¹ *Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, Vol. II, *Dirksen Papers (1938-1939)*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1948, p. 34.

"is the most significant event after the world war and is fraught with the gravest danger, not least to our Union."¹

On March 17, 1938, the Soviet government suggested that Britain, France, and the USA join it in collective actions to halt the further spread of aggression and eliminate the mounting threat of another world conflagration. "Tomorrow it may be too late," the Soviet government pointed out, "but today there is still time if all countries, especially the great powers, adopt a firm, unequivocal stand on the question of collectively saving peace."² But, as before, the British and French reaction was negative. The USA left the Soviet proposal unanswered.

Even in this situation the USSR did not relax its efforts to avert war. On March 17, immediately after the nazis entered Austria, the Soviet Union officially declared it was prepared to honour its commitments under the 1935 Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Mutual Assistance. In April 1938, the CPSU Central Committee passed a decision to help Czechoslovakia and informed the Czechoslovak President Edward Beneš of this decision.

The USSR was prepared to go to Czechoslovakia's assistance single-handed, without France, provided Czechoslovakia requested such assistance and, of course, defended itself. This was backed up by the corresponding military measures: 30 infantry divisions were massed along the Soviet Union's western frontier, large-scale military exercises were organised, and tanks and aircraft were kept in combat readiness. More than 500 Soviet bombers and fighter-planes were concentrated in only the Byelorussian and Kiev special military districts.

With the exception of the USSR, not a single government in the West, including the Beneš government itself, had any intention of resisting aggression against Czechoslovakia. In May 1938, Beneš had assured the British envoy in Prague that Czechoslovakia would "always follow and be bound to Western Europe and never to Eastern Europe".³ In the meantime, secret Anglo-German talks had begun in London to "settle" the Czechoslovak question. Germany was informed: "If we two, Great

¹ *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1980*, Vol. 1, 1917-1945, Moscow, 1980, p. 335 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Documents*, Vol. 21, 1977, p. 129.

³ *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. 1, London, 1949, p. 314.

Britain and Germany, come to agreement regarding the settlement of the Czech problem, we shall simply brush aside the resistance that France or Czechoslovakia herself may offer to the decision."¹ Czechoslovakia was not the point at issue—London regarded this question merely as a step towards the conclusion of an all-embracing agreement under which Germany would recognise the inviolability of the British empire and commit itself to take Britain's great power positions into account. This was the essence of Plan Z, which envisaged reinforcing the bargain with visits at all levels, including visits to Britain by Hermann Göring and even Hitler.² The French government gave the British its full support in the efforts to make a deal with Hitler at Czechoslovakia's expense.

In Munich, on September 29, 1938, Britain and France signed an agreement with Germany and Italy, under which Germany was to take from Czechoslovakia roughly 20 per cent of its territory that had one-fourth of that nation's population and nearly half of its heavy industry. The USA gave its unqualified approval to the outcome of the Munich talks. In the Soviet Union this deal was assessed as "an act, which for its brazenness has no equal in anything that has occurred since the first imperialist war".³

The very first post-Munich months showed how little grounds the Western political leaders had for hoping they could "appease" fascism. Hitler not only sliced off more territory than was agreed upon at Munich but demanded the annexation of other regions populated by nearly a million Czechs. On March 15, 1939, the Wehrmacht completed its occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia.

THE USSR'S LAST ATTEMPT TO AVERT WAR

The Soviet Union's next attempt to avert a second world war was its proposal of April 17, 1939, for forming an Anti-Hitler

¹ *Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, Vol. II, *Dirksen Papers (1938-1939)*, p. 45.

² I. D. Ovsyany, *The Secret that Ignited the War (How the Imperialists Planned and Unleashed the Second World War)*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 204-14 (in Russian).

³ *Pravda*, October 4, 1938.

Coalition on the basis of a military-political pact of mutual assistance between the USSR, Britain, and France, resting on the principle of equal rights and duties for all its signatories. The main articles of the draft, as proposed by the Soviet Union, stated:

"1. Britain, France, and the USSR conclude this Agreement for a term of five to ten years, on a mutual commitment to extend to each other every possible assistance, including military assistance, without delay in the event of aggression in Europe against any one of the Contracting Parties.

"2. Britain, France, and the USSR undertake to extend every, including military, assistance to the East European states situated between the Baltic and the Black seas and having a common border with the USSR in the event of aggression against these states.

"3. Britain, France, and the USSR undertake, within the shortest possible time, to consider and establish the volume and forms of military assistance to be rendered by each of them in compliance with Paragraphs 1 and 2."¹

Moreover, it was assumed that Britain, France, and the USSR would pledge that if hostilities broke out they would not enter into any negotiations or conclude a separate peace with the aggressors without agreement among all the three signatory powers. The Soviet proposals envisaged the signing of a military convention simultaneously with the political agreement. The substance of the Soviet proposals was communicated by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on July 19 to the Soviet ambassadors² in London and Paris.

The Soviet Union made what proved to be its last attempt to prevent a second world war, and the Western powers likewise made their last attempt, in July-August 1939, to divert war from themselves to the USSR. Documents from German secret archives confirm that Chamberlain was prepared to conclude an alliance with Germany and grant it a long-term loan of 3,500 mil-

¹ *The USSR in the Struggle for Peace on the Eve of the Second World War (September 1938-August 1939). Documents and Materials*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 336-37 (in Russian).

² In those years Soviet ambassadors had the title of Plenipotentiary Representatives. To avoid confusion the title of ambassador is used throughout this book.—Tr.

lion pounds sterling. According to the German ambassador in London Herbert von Dirksen, the essence of the Anglo-German agreement planned by Chamberlain was that "England would renounce the guarantees she had given to certain States in the German sphere of interest. Further, Great Britain would bring influence to bear on France to get her to give up her alliance with the Soviet Union and her commitments in Southeast Europe. She would also drop her treaty negotiations with the Soviet Union."¹ As von Dirksen put it, the "underlying purpose of this treaty was to make it possible for the British gradually to disembarass themselves of their commitments toward Poland... Then Poland... would be left to face Germany alone."²

All this was reflected in the stand taken by the Western powers at the negotiations on a military convention with the Soviet Union that were begun as a result of the Soviet proposal of July 23. In particular, the instructions to the British (and to the French) military missions were a clear indication that Britain had no intention whatever of signing an obligating military convention with the USSR on mutual assistance to repulse Nazi aggression.

At these negotiations the Soviet side presented a military plan providing for joint actions by the Soviet, British, and French armed forces in all possible cases of aggression. B.M. Shaposhnikov, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, showed how the Soviet Armed Forces would be deployed along the Soviet Union's western frontiers. In the event of aggression in Europe the Red Army was prepared to put into the field 120 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 pieces of heavy artillery, between 9,000 and 10,000 tanks, and between 5,000 and 5,500 aircraft. The fortified districts along the entire Soviet western frontier would be ready for action within four to six hours.³

Developments over the next two years definitively showed the enormity of the crime that the Munichmen of London and Paris committed against their own countries and the whole of human-

¹ *Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, Vol. II, *Dirksen Papers (1938-1939)*, p. 186.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 187.

³ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945. Vol. 2, The Eve of the War*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 144-46 (in Russian).

kind when they turned down the Soviet offer of cooperation. The anti-fascist coalition became a reality only in the latter half of 1941, but in the period after September 1, 1939, France was defeated, many European countries were occupied, and Britain found itself in a critical situation. "Today, when one re-reads the draft for the Anglo-French-Soviet treaty, one may well ask how blind and petty our diplomacy must have been in its approach to this matter, losing the opportunity for concluding a treaty of such crucial significance?"¹ General André Beaufre, who was a member of the French negotiating team, wrote bitterly in later years.

The West German historian Axel Kuhn realistically notes that the Soviet Union was well aware of Hitler's aggressive ambitions and took every possible step to prevent the formation of an anti-Soviet coalition of imperialist powers and make itself secure.² Nazi Germany's clash with the other powers was practically inevitable, writes Alan Bullock, a British expert on the history of fascism. "If the Western Powers had recognised the threat earlier and shown greater resolution in resisting Hitler's (and Mussolini's) demands, it is possible that the clash might not have led to war, or at any rate not to a war on the scale on which it had finally to be fought."³

B. H. Liddell Hart, one of the most eminent Western historians, is likewise of the opinion that the Second World War might have been prevented. Nazi aggression had to be countered by a united front of Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Peace could be saved, he wrote, by securing the support of Russia for Poland, and the situation demanded prompt action.⁴ But the British government's steps were "dilatatory and half-hearted". Liddell Hart comes very close to the truth but evades the main thing, namely, the recognition that had there been a united anti-Hitler front, the Second World War might have been averted altogether.

¹ Général André Beaufre, *Le drame de 1940*, Plon, Paris, 1965, p. 119.

² Manfred Funke (Herausgeber), *Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte*, Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1976, pp. 644-45.

³ *The Origins of the Second World War*, edited by E. M. Robertson, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., New York, 1971, p. 221.

⁴ B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, G. P. Putman's Sons, New York, 1971, p. 704.

This recognition came, instead, from the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, in February 1945. In presenting the decisions of the Crimea Conference of the leaders of three Allied powers—the USSR, the USA, and Britain—he said in the British parliament: "Can anyone doubt that, if we had had, in 1939, the unity between Russia, this country and the United States that we cemented at Yalta, there would not have been the present war?"¹ "History has severely punished the 'appeasers', who rejected the Soviet government's proposal for collective resistance to the fascist aggressors," Leonid Brezhnev noted. "Despite the forecasts and hopes that were running high at the time in London, Paris, and Washington, nazi Germany began the Second World War with an attack not on the USSR but on the capitalist countries of Europe."²

2. "...LET US FACE THE TRUTH SQUARELY"

"In politics that is always the best and the only correct attitude,"³ Lenin wrote, enlarging on his words, which we have used in the above heading. When it is a matter of the class struggle embracing all international relations, he said, "we must base our tactics first and foremost on an appraisal of the objective situation".⁴ What was the objective international situation confronting the USSR on September 1, 1939?

THE REALITY

With the exception of fraternal Mongolia it had no friends on the international scene. The socialist community of nations, which is today the leading factor of international politics and

¹ *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons Official Report*, Vol. 408, Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1945, p. 1514.

² I. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Vol. 1 p. 122 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, "More About the Political Crisis", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, 1964, p. 275.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Extraordinary Fourth All-Russia Congress of Soviets", *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, 1965, pp. 172-73.

the most dynamic economic force in the world, was non-existent at the time. Instead of the many new states of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which today oppose imperialism, there was imperialism's colonial system. The international proletariat and the Communist and workers' parties were the USSR's only ally against the imperialist system.

The USSR's border with capitalist countries extended over many thousands of kilometres. Of decisive importance was not so much the geographical fact of this capitalist encirclement as the circumstance that in practically all of the USSR's neighbours the ruling circles were unsympathetic, to say the least, to the bulwark of socialism. Anti-Sovietism and anti-communism were usually the rules there.

The reality was such that not a single imperialist power nor any of the countries bordering on the USSR (Finland, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Iran, and others) had any desire to base its relations with the Soviet Union on the permanent basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourly relations. On the contrary, they systematically flouted their treaty and other obligations to the USSR. The imperialist powers used all the means at their disposal to erode the external and internal conditions for socialist construction in the USSR: direct subversion, political struggle in all directions, anti-Soviet alliances and coalitions, total discrimination in trade and in the economic sphere, and unceasing ideological warfare. But more important than anything else was that large-scale material preparations were underway for a military collision with the USSR: conflict situations were created, and anti-Soviet forces were aided and abetted. The prospect of a head-on collision between the imperialist camp and the Soviet Union, up to a war of annihilation, was becoming ever more imminent. "Given the entire complexity of the causes that led to the Second World War and the diversity of the motivations of the imperialist powers involved in it, all of them were united by their class hostility towards socialism."¹

Such was the overall international situation characterising the

¹ K. I. Zarodov, *Socialism, Peace, Revolution*, Moscow, 1977, pp. 62-63 (in Russian).

USSR's standing and potentialities on the eve of the Second World War.

Specifically, during the last prewar months the situation was characterised, on the one hand, by a sharp increase of the threat to Soviet security in Europe and Asia and, on the other, by the USSR's growing isolation on the international scene. The policy of collusion with the aggressor pursued by Britain and France with US support brought the world on the brink of military catastrophe. The refusal by Britain, France, and Poland to act jointly with the USSR to repulse nazi aggression made it obvious that towards the close of August 1939 the last possibility for averting a world war had evaporated. The USSR could not do it single-handedly. "It was an unattainable aim to avert war when the USSR was alone and encircled by capitalist countries, and the international working class had been split by the Right-wing Socialists."¹

THE USSR THREATENED BY ATTACK FROM THE WEST AND THE EAST

Meanwhile, Europe was hit by a prewar political crisis that began with the occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia by Germany. The political atmosphere was white-hot with tension running high in inter-state relations. Having become the predominant power in Central Europe and bent on aggression, Germany was planning to continue its expansion eastward. On April 11, 1939, the nazi leadership endorsed a plan, code-named Case Weiss, for the invasion of Poland at any time from September 1, 1939. On April 28 Hitler announced Germany's denunciation of its 1934 pact with Poland. Uncasiness enhanced by the ever-closer unity of the powers of the fascist Axis, which had gone beyond the political framework of the Anti-Comintern Pact and evolved into military cooperation. On May 22, 1939, Germany and Italy signed the *Stahlpakt* (Steel Pact). Japan's involvement in this pact was on the agenda.

As could be seen from the Anglo-German and Franco-Germ-

¹ *A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Moscow, 1980, p. 448 (in Russian).

an declarations, signed on the heels of the Munich deal at the close of September and in December 1938 respectively, Britain and France had, in effect, undertook not to attack Germany. The assumption of this obligation by France signified, among other things, the invalidation of the 1935 Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Thus, with Germany poised for aggression eastward, the USSR found itself without military allies. The results of the talks with Britain and France in the spring and summer of 1939 made it plain that the Western powers were reluctant to join the Soviet efforts to prevent war. The facts indicated that by refusing to give the USSR military guarantees in the event of direct aggression against it these powers had exposed it to invasion.

What the military-strategic scenario of the trap would be? Germany would attack Poland, the system of political commitments desired by the Western powers would come into operation, and the Soviet Union would have no alternative to declaring war on Germany. Without military allies the USSR was a very attractive target for aggression. Key military advantages were given to Germany in advance: having no possibility of crossing the frontier into Poland and coming into combat contact with the enemy, the Soviet Armed Forces would be fettered in their choice of a strategic initiative, which would depend entirely on the Wehrmacht Command.

An extremely difficult situation had taken shape for the USSR in the Far East, where the Western powers had long been pushing Japan against it. The leaders and diplomatic circles of the imperialist powers were expecting war to break between Japan and the Soviet Union. In one of his dispatches the US ambassador in Tokyo Joseph C. Grew explained why he felt "a Russo-Japanese conflict is more threatening in 1939 than in past years". He wrote: "In the present state of Chinese military affairs, Japan might well expect, if involved in hostilities against the Soviet Union, that, although execution of plans of economic exploitation on the continent would be seriously delayed, Japan would face no acute military problem from China... The Munich conference has had a marked effect upon Japanese thinking with regard to foreign relations, and the conference is taken here to mean that no obstacles will be interposed against German pressure upon the Soviet Union... Japan con-

siders the Soviet Union at the present time internally weakened and externally in a position of singular isolation."¹

Indeed, since May 1939, following Japan's attack on the Mongolian People's Republic, large-scale hostilities involving more and more troops on both sides had unfolded on the Khalkhin Gol River. Under the protocol on mutual assistance signed on March 12, 1936, by the USSR and Mongolia, the Soviet government had sent Red Army units to help its ally. No war had been declared either by Japan, the USSR or Mongolia, but it was nevertheless being fought.

Only a few weeks before the Second World War broke out two events occurred which still further complicated the international situation for the USSR. An agreement under which Britain recognised Japan's seizures in China and pledged to raise no obstacles to the attainment of Japan's military aims in China was signed in Tokyo on July 24, 1939. In other words, the Japanese troops operating on occupied Chinese territory, from where hostilities were being conducted against the USSR and Mongolia on the Khalkhin Gol River, were guaranteed against attack from the rear. This was precisely the "Far Eastern Munich" that the Western powers wanted in order to encourage the aggressive anti-Soviet ambitions of the Japanese militarists. On August 10 the government of Kiichiro Hiranuma announced that it was prepared to sign a military treaty with Germany and Italy with all the ensuing dangerous consequences to the security of the USSR.

Within literally a few days before the outbreak of the world war the Soviet Union found itself faced by the prospect of having to fight a war concurrently against two powerful countries in Europe and in Asia at a time when it was in military and political isolation. This was actually the situation that Britain, France, and the USA had planned to create by long years of "appeasing" aggressive powers. Stating the desired objective of the Munich strategy to Harold L. Ickes, a member of the US government, in December 1938, the US ambassador in Paris William Bullitt bluntly declared that in due course Germany "will try to take the Ukraine... In the process Germany will

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers 1939*, Vol. III, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1955, p. 2.

extend herself to such a degree that she cannot stand the strain. She will break under it in the end. Similarly, Japan will conquer or attempt to conquer Siberia, and she in time will break under that strain. But by leaving Russia to her fate, England and France will be diverting the threat of Germany from their own lands."¹

THE ONLY POSSIBLE DECISION

During the last week of August 1939, when it had become clear that a world war could not be averted, the Soviet Union was confronted with the need unilaterally to safeguard its territory from attack by Germany, if only for a short period. The USSR had no reasonable alternative to prolonging, even if only temporarily, a state of non-aggression with Germany. To intervene in the German-Polish war would signify jeopardising socialism's gains in the USSR on its own initiative.

The Soviet leadership had to change the situation at all costs, to postpone an attack by the imperialists for as long as possible, and spike their designs. The preservation of the first and, at the time, only socialist state was required by the interests of international socialism and of the working people of all countries. In their actions, the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government were guided by the instructions of the Party's 18th Congress to proceed with caution and give the warmongers no pretext for dragging the Soviet Union into conflicts. This was the point of departure of the CPSU and the government when they made the crucial decision to sign, on August 23, 1939, with Germany a treaty of non-aggression, which had earlier been offered by Berlin. This forced step was consonant with political realism and an accurate assessment of the objective situation. Lenin had, in his time, said: "Is it the correct policy for us to use the discord between the imperialist bandits to make it more difficult for them to unite against us...? Of course, it is the correct policy."²

¹ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. II, *The Inside Struggle*, 1936-1939, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1954, p. 519.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 470.

The decision was taken only after no doubt was left that the governments of Britain, France, and Poland were reluctant to sign an agreement with the USSR on joint resistance to Nazi aggression and all other possibilities for safeguarding the USSR's security had been exhausted. On August 26 the People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR K. Y. Voroshilov, who headed the Soviet military delegation at the negotiations with Britain and France, publicly announced: "The military talks with Britain and France were suspended not because the USSR had concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany; on the contrary, the USSR signed the non-aggression pact with Germany because of, among other things, the circumstance that the military talks with France and Britain had reached an impasse by virtue of insuperable disagreements."¹ In this same statement by the Soviet Defence Commissar Nazi Germany was again called an aggressor.

Even after August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union did not abandon its hope for collective security. Thus, on the very next day, August 24, London informed the British Embassy in the USA of V. M. Molotov's statement that "after a bit, say a week, negotiations with France and this country might be continued".²

The supreme significance of the non-aggression pact was that it prevented the formation of a united front of imperialist powers against the Soviet Union. Harold L. Ickes, certainly no friend of the USSR, noted: "I am not surprised at Russia's action... Russia suspected England of playing double with her while making terms with Germany. I believe that this was true: that England could have terms with Russia long ago. She kept hoping against hope that she could embroil Russia and Germany with each other and thus escape scot-free herself. She got caught in her own toils and in so doing has lost the respect and the sympathy of the world generally."³ Bernard Shaw said at the time that he failed to see why so much tension was generated by the news of a Russo-German pact. Hitler, he declared, was in the powerful hands of Stalin whose desire for peace prevailed over all else.

¹ *Izvestia*, August 27, 1939.

² *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1939, Vol. I, 1956, p. 311.

³ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. II, p. 705.

The effect of these resolute actions by the USSR on the world scene was of inestimable significance for the subsequent struggle against the fascist Axis. The USSR put paid to the unity that was being forged in the imperialist camp. The conclusion of the non-aggression pact infuriated Tokyo, which was counting on the possibility of striking at the USSR in collaboration with Germany. On August 24, 1939, the Soviet embassy in Japan reported that the news made a "stunning impression, obviously sowing confusion especially among the military and in the fascist camp".¹ The official protest made to Germany qualified the pact as "running counter to the secret treaty appended to the Anti-Comintern Pact".² The Hiranuma government's positions were damaged and it fell. Japan was now compelled to settle the acute conflict situation on the Khalkhin Gol River.

The Italian fascists likewise saw the pact as a blow to their plans. They wanted the nazis to expand mainly eastward, in the direction of the USSR, so that nazi Berlin would not turn its attention to Rome's Balkan sphere of imperialist interests. Italy refused to enter the war at the same time as Germany, Franco Spain, too, announced that it would be "neutral".

As a result, the Second World War broke out not as a coordinated action of the Axis powers but as an act of aggression by Germany alone. The military consolidation of the aggressor coalition was set back by approximately a year. It was only in July 1940 that Japan and Germany resumed the talks that had been broken off in August 1939 following the conclusion of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact. Germany, Japan, and Italy formalised their tripartite alliance on September 27, 1940.

In *The Truth About Hitler*, a book written jointly with Wilfried Reckert, member of the Presidium of the Board of the German Communist Party, Kurt Bachmann relates how the pact was received by the German Communists: "In Germany at the time it was forbidden to listen to foreign broadcasts on pain of long imprisonment, incarceration in a concentration camp, or even death. In this situation the only orientation that could be

got was provided in a statement by the underground CPG leadership broadcast on August 25, 1939, by Radio Moscow. As it had always done before, the CPG warned of the danger presented by Hitler. Addressing our people it declared that 'peace would be secured only if the German people took the future of the German nation into their own hands'. The party stressed that it was in the vital interests of the German people to abide by the treaty, not to attack the Soviet Union. The German Communists saw the justice and necessity of the non-aggression pact, and upheld it, even though its significance was fully appreciated only after liberation from nazism in 1945... The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was aware of Germany's aggressive intentions, but did not know when the attack be launched and sought to stave it off."¹

3. MAIN DIRECTIONS AND SPECIFICS OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The very possibility of winning time in order to strengthen the bulwark of the world revolutionary process, a possibility created by Soviet foreign policy on the eve of the Second World War, was a tangible contribution to the struggle against fascism on a global scale. "No one can doubt that the coming war, even if it begins as a war between two big imperialist powers or as a war of a big power against a small country, will inevitably tend to develop into and will inevitably become a war against the Soviet Union. Every year and every month of respite is a guarantee for us that the Soviet Union will be in position to better repulse the attack of the imperialists,"² said Palmiro Togliatti, outstanding personality of the international communist and working-class movement, as early as 1935 at the VII Congress of the Communist International. Throughout the period from September 1, 1939, to June 22, 1941, Soviet foreign policy was guided by

¹ *The USSR in the Struggle for Peace on the Eve of the Second World War (September 1938-August 1939)*, p. 637.

² *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 2, p. 288.

¹ *Die Wahrheit über Hitler. Kurt Bachmann im Gespräch mit Wilfried Reckert*, Weltkreis Verlag, Dortmund, 1978, pp. 121, 123.

² *VII Congress of the Communist International. Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings*, Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., London, p. 417.

the need to make use of this priceless respite to reinforce the security of the USSR in all politico-geographical directions to the extent that this was possible.

The guidelines laid down by the 18th Congress of the CPSU for the USSR on the international scene, and formulated in the CC report to the congress, were a programme for Soviet foreign policy. These stated:

"1. The policy of peace and strengthening business contacts with all countries shall be continued.

"2. Caution shall be exercised and the instigators of war, who are used to others pulling the chestnuts out of the fire, shall be given no opportunity to drag our country into conflicts;

"3. The utmost shall be done to strengthen the combat efficiency of our Red Army and Red Navy;

"4. International ties of friendship with the working people of all countries interested in peace and friendship among nations shall be promoted."¹

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the USSR defined its attitude to the belligerent groups as a neutral in the context of international law, stating this in notes handed on September 17, 1939, to the ambassadors of all the countries with which the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations.² The Soviet policy of neutrality differed fundamentally from the policy of neutrality pursued by the USA in that period.

The Soviet government's report to the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the spring of 1940 stated: "In brief, our foreign policy objectives are to ensure peace among nations and the security of our country. The conclusion from this is the posture of neutrality and non-participation in the war between the leading European powers. This posture is based on the treaties signed by us, and is fully in keeping with the interests of the Soviet Union. Moreover, this posture exercises an influence restraining the spread of war in Europe, and it thereby conforms to the interests of all peoples desiring peace or already suffering enormous privation caused by war... We

¹ 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), March 10-21, 1939. *Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1939, p. 15 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, pp. 448-49 (in Russian).

feel that in the matter of ensuring our country's security we have scored no little success during this time. This is precisely what infuriates our enemies. For our part, with faith in our cause and in our strength, we shall continue to pursue our foreign policy consistently and steadfastly."¹

Presenting an analysis of the international situation up to August 1940, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR told the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR: "In this situation the Soviet Union should display heightened vigilance relative to its external security and to reinforcing all its internal and external positions. We have effected a switch from a seven-hour to an eight-hour working day and taken other steps in line with our duty to secure a further and more massive growth of our country's defence and economic potential, a serious tightening of discipline among all the working people, and to work hard to promote labour productivity in our country."²

In its efforts to reinforce the USSR's security and international positions, Soviet foreign policy made active use of inter-imperialist contradictions in accordance with Lenin's emphasis on the need for a strategy of this kind. "We," Lenin said, "can all clearly see the clash of the imperialist states' interests. Despite all pronouncements by their ministers about the peaceful settlement of questions in dispute, the imperialist powers cannot in reality take a single serious step in political matters without disagreeing."³ The paramount and immediate aim of Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941, especially in view of the fact that as a result of the ongoing world war all the anti-Soviet forces on the international scene had become more active, was to use these disagreements to counter the military threat and to ensure peaceful conditions for socialist construction in the USSR.

¹ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 42 (in Russian).

² *Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. August 1-August 7, 1940. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 42 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, "Speech Delivered at a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Deputies, Trade Unions, and Factory Committees, May 5, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 131.

In an address headed "Twenty-Second Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution" the Comintern Executive Committee noted that the ruling quarters in the imperialist states started the war not for the freedom of peoples or for saving democracy from fascism, but for the entrenchment of reaction and further imperialist seizures. "The governing classes of Britain, France, and Germany are waging war for *world supremacy*. This war is a continuation of the many-years' imperialist rivalry in the capitalist camp."¹

As the Second World War grew in scope the peoples in many countries increasingly pressed their governments to take a harder stand against the aggressive powers. The liberation struggle of peoples began to unfold under the leadership of communist and workers' parties. For the peoples of the countries at war with Germany and its allies, this was increasingly becoming an anti-fascist war. Academician Y. M. Zhukov writes that "the Second World War broke out within the capitalist system. At its initial stage, this was an unjust imperialist war not only on the part of the aggressive fascist bloc but also on the part of the Anglo-French coalition. However, it would be inadequate to assess the Second World War of even this period as imperialist on both sides, because the resistance of the masses in the countries subjected to fascist aggression focussed in liberation from the outset. One should bear in mind the special danger from the states of the aggressive fascist bloc, which started the war with the objective of enslaving the entire world and establishing a predatory 'new order'. For that reason, for the peoples of Poland and other states that fell victim to fascist aggression the war was from the very beginning a just struggle for freedom and national independence."²

In this situation the Soviet Union intensified its foreign policy actions to counter the fascist threat and check the fascist bloc's further expansion in Northern Europe and the Balkans and the strengthening of Germany's positions in countries neighbouring on the USSR—Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Concurrently—and this, too, was a major contribution by Soviet

¹ *Kommunistichesky International*, No. 8-9, 1939, pp. 3-4.

² Y. M. Zhukov, "The Origins of the Second World War", *Novaya i noveishaya istoria*, No. 1, 1980, p. 5.

foreign policy towards facilitating a successful struggle against fascism—the USSR did everything it could to cut short the Munich anti-Soviet thrusts by Britain, France, and the USA in their attempts to weaken the positions of the bulwark of socialism.

The Second World War acquired a definitively just and liberative character when the Soviet Union became involved. This was decisive to mobilising all the peoples for the struggle against fascism, for freedom, independence, and social progress. The USSR's armed engagement with fascism, Nazi Germany's inability to gain the upper hand over the USSR, and the Soviet Armed Forces' victories inspired the peoples of the occupied countries with the hope that their resistance to fascism would be successful and were the main factor in turning this resistance into a mass armed struggle of peoples against the fascist "new order".

NAZI GERMANY—THE MAIN THREAT

In the context of the Soviet Union's security, relations with the aggressor powers—the Nazi imperialist group and military Japan—were the central problem of Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941. With Germany poised on the Soviet western frontiers in September 1939, these states had a border with the USSR extending for thousands of kilometres and huge springboards for aggression against the Soviet Union.

Throughout the initial period of the Second World War the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government proceeded from the assumption that there would inevitably be a collision with Nazi Germany, which was the most reactionary force ever spawned by imperialism. In Moscow there were no illusions whatever about the nature of fascism and its insatiable appetite for aggression. One evidence of this is provided in a report of a conversation between the British ambassador Stafford Cripps and Joseph Stalin (September 21, 1940) sent to Washington by the US ambassador Laurence Steinhardt, who wrote: "Stalin had been extremely frank, realistic... Stalin had made it quite clear that his present policy was designed to avoid the involvement of the Soviet Union in the war and, in particular, to avoid a conflict with the German Army. Stalin had admitted that Ger-

many constituted the only real threat to the Soviet Union and that a German victory would place the Soviet Union in a difficult if not dangerous position, but he felt that it was impossible at the present time to invite the certainty of a German invasion of the Soviet Union by any alteration of Soviet Policy."¹

The USSR faced Germany under conditions that were extremely unfavourable. Germany had access to enormous economic resources that, as it subjugated Western Europe, considerably surpassed the economic potentialities of the Soviet Union. Germany enjoyed an undisputed reputation of being the strongest military power of the capitalist world. It commanded huge foreign policy resources—its central role in the powerful coalition of European and Asian imperialist states, the growing coordination of their strategic plans and practical actions in many areas of world politics (which gave Berlin increasing leverage in regions of the world far from Germany) and, lastly, the nazi political diktat in Europe and the ramified system of alliances and links with many European countries. Class hatred for the USSR throughout the capitalist world and the anti-Soviet and anti-communist leaning of the ruling quarters in the countries forming the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union played into the hands of Germany as the shock force of another "crusade" against the world's first socialist country.

Of course, serious difficulties were created for the Soviet Union's policy towards Germany by the intensified efforts of Germany's imperialist rivals to hasten a clash between the USSR and the nazis. These efforts and the need to counter them were a drag on the Soviet Union's possibilities for manoeuvre.

In the initial period of the war the main concern of Soviet foreign policy relative to Germany was to keep Berlin bound as long as possible to the commitment of non-aggression, even if this was unreliable and unstable, bring into play all political potentialities for containing the nazi leadership's aggressive ambitions, and use every possibility for strengthening the USSR's defence capacity. At the same time, the Soviet Union did not, of course, retreat from its fundamental principles. In the concrete situation of 1939-1941 the only realistic line was one that ruled out both foreign policy adventurism and capitulation. This

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. I, 1959, p. 611.

was the only line that could ensure the attainment of the central objective, which was to safeguard and strengthen, in fulfilment of Lenin's behests, the bulwark of the world revolutionary process—the Soviet Union. The maintenance of relations with Berlin on the level of the non-aggression treaty predicated the special and not always visible character of the diplomatic battles between the Soviet Union and Germany, when the Soviet Union's striving to avoid unnecessary strains was always combined with its firm stand against nazi intrigues. Soviet foreign policy countered Germany strictly to the extent of the damage Germany sought to inflict on the interests of the USSR's security, without allowing matters to reach a point of sharp confrontation.

It must be specially emphasised that the Soviet efforts, in the early period of the Second World War, to secure better conditions for the inescapable clash with nazism were made by no means solely through Soviet-German relations as such. To reduce Soviet foreign policy preparations to repulse nazi aggression to these relations would be a gross mistake. Yet this is exactly what is being done by most bourgeois historians, who studiously separate Soviet-German relations of 1939-1941 from the overall context of Soviet international efforts in that period. They ignore a key aspect of the problem, namely, the tense struggle between the USSR and Germany in regions adjoining the USSR. There were anti-Soviet manoeuvres by Germany in Finland, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Japan, Hungary, Turkey, Romania, Iran, Sweden, Yugoslavia, and other countries. The forms and methods of the Soviet counteraction to these manoeuvres were in each case selected to fit the situation.

Soviet policy towards Germany was, needless to say, by no means passive, as was asserted at the time by the political forces hostile to the USSR and as is still being asserted by present-day bourgeois historians. It was not a matter of the Soviet Union having been used by Germany, as most bourgeois historians maintain, but a case of Soviet diplomacy skilfully using imperialist contradictions on a large historical scale.

Deep-seated motivations gave birth to the myth of a "deal" between the USSR and Germany. Its political basis was the desire of the ruling circles of the two imperialist coalitions to have people think along precisely these lines. In London, Paris,

and Washington the allegation that the USSR and Germany had struck a "bargain" was made with the purpose of discrediting the USSR and inflicting the maximum political damage on it. It was also expected that in refuting this blatant lie the Soviet Union would lose its temper, fall for the provocation, and thereby cause a further exacerbation of its relations with Germany.

In the case of Berlin's rulers, they were even more active in their efforts to sustain this myth, chiefly to engineer a deterioration of the USSR's relations with Britain, France, and the USA. Roughly from the latter half of 1940 to almost the moment the USSR was invaded, the nazis peddled this myth through the mass media and through diplomatic and intelligence channels as a means of camouflaging their preparations for aggression against the Soviet Union.

Throughout the initial period of the Second World War Soviet diplomacy exposed the provocative assertions about the character of the relations between the USSR and Germany. For instance, on February 22, 1940, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR instructed the Soviet ambassador in London I. M. Maisky to inform the British Foreign Office of the following fundamental line of the Soviet Union's relations with Germany: "First. We consider as ridiculous and insulting not only the assertion but even any assumption that the USSR has allegedly entered into a military alliance with Germany. Even simpletons in politics do not enter so lightmindedly into a military alliance with a belligerent power for they cannot but realise how complex and hazardous such an alliance would be... Second. The economic treaty with Germany is no more than trade agreement under which exports from the USSR to Germany will reach the sum of only 500 million marks; besides, this agreement is economically beneficial to the USSR, which receives from Germany a large number of machine tools and other equipment, as well as quite a large amount of armaments, the sale of which has been consistently denied to us in both Britain and France. Third. The USSR remains neutral, as before, if of course, Britain and France do not attack it and compel it to take up arms. The rumours, assiduously spread, that the USSR and Germany have entered into a military alliance are sustained not only by certain elements in Germany itself in order to intimidate Brit-

ain and France but also by some agents of Britain and France themselves, which want to use the imagined 'switch of the USSR to the German camp' for their special purposes in internal politics."¹

The bourgeois inventions about a "deal" between the USSR and Germany are compellingly refuted by historical evidence such as, for example, the content and orientation of Soviet military-strategic planning. What "accord" could there have been when as early as April 1940 the General Staff of the Red Army, acting on instructions from the CPSU Central Committee, was completing its operational plan for repulsing the expected German attack?

A. M. Vasilevsky, who was at approximately that time appointed First Deputy Chief of the General Staff's Operational Department, was actively involved in drawing up that plan. In his memoirs he writes: "We worked in concord and very intensively. The operational plan took up all our time and thoughts. *Hitler Germany was indicated in the plan as the most likely and main adversary* (my italics.—P.S.). It was assumed that Italy might act on the German side, but, the plan specified, it would in all probability confine itself to the Balkans, indirectly threatening our frontiers. Germany could possibly be supported by Finland (after the defeat of France and British evacuation from Dunkirk the Finnish leaders drew closer to Berlin), Romania (a source of raw materials for Germany since 1939, rejecting neutrality altogether to join the fascist bloc in the summer of the next year) and Hungary (at the time already a member of the Anti-Comintern Pact). Shaposhnikov felt that hostilities might be confined to the western borders of the USSR. In this connection, it was there that the plan proposed the concentration of our main forces. A Japanese attack on our Far East was not precluded, however, and so the plan provided for such a force to be deployed there as would guarantee us a stable situation."² Such were the basic military-strategic points of the Soviet operational plan for repulsing aggression.

As regards the question of determining the exact time of a

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² A. M. Vasilevsky, *A Lifelong Cause*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 74.

decisive clash between the USSR and Nazi Germany, a question that acquired special significance in the closing months of the initial period of the Second World War, the author fully subscribes to the following conclusion: "The aggressive designs of the Nazi clique and its intention to attack the Soviet Union were obvious to the Soviet government and the Soviet Armed Forces Command. But there was a miscalculation in determining the time of this attack."¹

Broadly speaking, all the foreign policy steps taken by the Party to strengthen the Soviet Union's security pursued the aim of winning better external conditions for the inevitable conflict with the Third Reich: on the western and southwestern frontiers, in the northwest (the Soviet-Finnish armed conflict and its outcome), the efforts to reinforce security in the southeast, the efforts to maintain normal or improve relations with the Soviet Union's southern neighbours, the efforts to reduce the threat from Japanese militarism by political means, and so on. One way or another, all these efforts were made with account of the likelihood of a Nazi invasion. Premature involvement in the war with Germany, to which the Anglo-French coalition was assiduously inciting the USSR, would not have allowed achieving these aims to the extent this was done, to say nothing of the fact that the Soviet defence programme would have been disrupted.

The bourgeois inventions about a "Soviet-German deal" are totally disproved by the content and orientation of the Soviet Union's military and economic effort. In 1940 the USSR's expenditures on defence were more than double their level in 1938, amounting to 56,000 million rubles.² In the course of three and a half years of the third five-year-plan period the investments in the defence industry comprised more than one-fourth of all the investments that were put into industry.³

The Communist Party did much to reorganise the work of industry and transport and to create the necessary state reserves

¹ *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1980*, Vol. 1, 1917-1945, p. 419; also see Chapter 7 of this book.

² Andrei Grechko, *The Armed Forces in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp. 18-19.

³ *A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Vol. 5, Book 1, Moscow, 1970, p. 117 (in Russian).

and mobilisation stocks. In the period between January 1939 and January 1941 the increases in state reserves and mobilisation stocks were: pig iron—five-fold; rolled stock—two-fold; copper—more than two-fold; zinc—2.2-fold; and lead—1.6-fold. Stocks of food and fodder were created to last the Armed Forces from four to six months in the event of war. The value of the nation's material resources was nearly doubled in the course of 18 months before Nazi Germany invaded the USSR. The Soviet defence industry developed at roughly three times the rate of all the other industries.¹

The CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government were well aware that Berlin's attitude to the observance of the non-aggression pact neither was nor could be sincere. Soviet diplomacy had no illusions on this score. "As to evaluating the non-aggression pact signed with Germany in 1939, at a time when the Soviet Union could be attacked on two fronts—by Germany and by Japan—there are no grounds for asserting that Stalin relied on it. The CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government proceeded from the assumption that while this pact did not deliver the USSR from the threat of Nazi aggression it gave us an opportunity to win time for strengthening our defences and prevent the formation of a united anti-Soviet front,"² writes Marshal G. K. Zhukov, who in February 1941 was appointed Chief of the Red Army General Staff.

ANTI-SOVIETISM OF THE IMPERIALIST ADVERSARIES OF THE AXIS POWERS

On the question of the policy of "non-interference" and "appeasement" of aggressor the CC report to the 18th CPSU Congress declares: "In the policy of non-interference there is the transparent striving and desire not to hinder the aggressors in their sinister work, not to prevent, say, Japan from getting embroiled in war with China and, still better, with the Soviet

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations of Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 387-88, 382.

² G. K. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflection*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1978, p. 229 (in Russian).

Union, not to prevent, say, Germany from getting stuck in European affairs, from getting embroiled in war with the Soviet Union, and to let all the belligerents sink deep in the mire of war, to tacitly encourage them to do so, to let them wear down and exhaust each other and then, when they are sufficiently weakened, to enter the stage with fresh forces, to enter, of course, 'in the interests of peace' and to dictate terms to the weakened belligerents."¹ This political assessment of the Munich policy accurately defined the political aspirations of nazi Germany's imperialist adversaries throughout 1939-1941 and, to some extent, in the subsequent period.

The strengthening of the Soviet Union's security in the face of the nazi threat was the central but by no means sole objective of Soviet foreign policy during these years. The anti-Soviet tendencies in the policy of the German bloc's imperialist rivals, the Anglo-French coalition, were extremely dangerous to the USSR. During the "phoney war", i.e., until mid-May 1940, the international climate for the USSR was at times fraught with a mounting danger of an armed intervention by Britain and France.

Motivated by their anti-Sovietism the British and French governments actually brought the war with Germany to a standstill, showing instead a readiness to use their armed forces against the USSR. In terms of the harm that was directly inflicted on Soviet security interests and of the intensity of their anti-Soviet activities during the period of the "phoney war" in Europe, the Anglo-French coalition was objectively not second to nazi Germany. In planning and, in fact, preparing for hostilities against the USSR during the first few months of 1940 (in a northwestern and a southern directions), London and Paris were even ahead of nazi Germany, where the drawing of operational plans of war against the USSR was started only in the latter half of 1940.

It is pointed out by the Soviet historian O. A. Rzheshesky that the design and plans for a new joint anti-Soviet "crusade" were the logical continuation of the prewar policies pursued by the Western powers, which prepared a second world war with

the aim of destroying the world's first socialist state and redividing the world at its expense. "The anti-Soviet military schemes of the period between the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940 were the last and most adventurist gamble in the criminal strategy of the Munichmen: they undertook the initiative to launch aggression. Their calculations were that in these circumstances nazi Germany would take 'its natural step' and likewise attack the USSR."¹

An analysis of the entire range of the anti-Soviet policies pursued by the Anglo-French coalition and the USA inevitably leads to the conclusion that these policies were, in essence, followed in all geographical directions and affected all major matters relative to the security of the USSR—in the Soviet northwest, where Finland was being pushed into war against the Soviet Union, with Britain and France displaying their readiness to intervene militarily on the side of the Finnish militarists; in the Soviet west, where anti-Soviet campaigns were aimed at disrupting the measures being taken by the USSR to reinforce its security (Western Ukraine, Western Byelorussia, and the Baltic region); in the southwest, where efforts were made to kindle anti-Soviet aspirations of bourgeois-landowner Romania nudged into a confrontation with the USSR, and where anti-Soviet intrigues were being woven in Sofia, Budapest, and Belgrade; in the south, where military aggression against the USSR was also planned, attempts were being made to draw Turkey into anti-Soviet activity, and hostility for the USSR was being fanned in Iran and Afghanistan; in the Far East, where the Anglo-French coalition and the USA spared no effort to aggravate Soviet-Japanese relations and channel Tokyo's expansionism to the north, to the frontiers of the USSR.

In other words, in the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union there was practically no country where British and French diplomacy was not playing an anti-Soviet game to one extent or another. The reason for this active anti-Soviet preoccupation on the part of Britain and France, as well as of the USA, was rooted chiefly in the logic of the Munich political conception, which was to divert Germany from its expansionist ambitions

¹ 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), March 10-21, 1939. *Verbatim Report*, p. 13.

¹ O. A. Rzheshesky, *War and History (US Bourgeois Historiography of the Second World War)*, Moscow, 1976, p. 100 (in Russian).

in the west, direct nazi aggression against the USSR, compel the USSR to fight for the interests of the Anglo-French coalition, and secure a qualitative weakening and, perhaps, the destruction of the world's first socialist state. A key objective of this policy was to block the Soviet Union's striving to avoid involvement in the imperialist war, by chilling its relations with Germany, and draw it as quickly as possible into the war in the most unfavourable situation.

In his last major work on the history of the Second World War, B. H. Liddell Hart lays bare the logic of the foreign policy thinking in London and Paris during this period. "The rapid overrunning of Poland," he writes, "was followed by a six months' lull—christened the 'Phoney War'... For the leaders, as well as the public, in the Western countries spent the time in framing fanciful plans for attacking Germany's flanks—and talked about them all too openly. In reality, there was no prospect of France and Britain ever being able, alone, to develop the strength required to overcome Germany. Their best hope, now that Germany and Russia faced each other on a common border, was that friction would... draw Hitler's explosive force eastward, instead of westward. That happened a year later, and *might well have happened earlier if the Western Allies had not been impatient*"¹ (my italics.—P.S.).

Articulating the views of many Western political leaders of the time, Liddell Hart regrets that the efforts of the Anglo-French coalition to provoke this clash were "inadequate". But the decisive factor was not inadequacy of the efforts made by Britain and France—these were more than adequate—but in the effectiveness of Soviet foreign policy.

By focussing on worsening the external conditions for the USSR, British and French diplomacy sought to camouflage the military inaction of their countries so as altogether to avoid having to fight a real war with Germany. This was admitted candidly by, among others, the British newspaper magnate Lord Beaverbrook in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador. London's most cherished dream was to see a German-Soviet front.

However, in 1939-1941 the anti-Sovietism of the Anglo-French coalition was not head-on, undisguised in all situations.

¹ B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, p. 706.

During the period of the "phoney war" and, to a large extent, up to the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, British, French, and US diplomacy engaged in a complex game relative to the USSR, seeking to combine incompatible objectives. On the one hand, the British and French tried to secure a deterioration of the external conditions for the USSR by bringing every possible pressure to bear on the USSR, deteriorating Soviet-German relations and by fanning anti-Soviet feeling among the Soviet Union's neighbours. On the other hand, the reality of the state of war with Germany kept reminding London and Paris that by going too far they could lose, for their anti-Soviet policy could lead to a military confrontation with the USSR and thereby make an enemy of yet another great power. Hence the many attempts by the leaders of the Anglo-French coalition, notably the British, to start a conversation about a "desire" to seek a "general improvement of relations", to set a "new tone" in the relations with the USSR, etc.

These approaches were made chiefly for tactical reasons—to ensure that their anti-Soviet policy did not alienate the USSR. In no instance did London and Paris raise in practical terms the question of expedient steps in the sphere of political, let alone military cooperation with the USSR. On the contrary, they demanded one concession after another from the Soviet Union, seeking gradually to draw the USSR into the war, to move it from its neutrality posture, pushing it not into a realistic and equitable alliance with the Anglo-French coalition, as was offered by the USSR at the negotiations in the summer of 1939 and realised only with the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, but into a premature confrontation with Germany, while themselves remaining aloof.

The USA likewise used various pretexts to inflame tension in its relations with the Soviet Union. Cordell Hull acknowledges in his memoirs that on the eve of the Hitler's invasion of the USSR, US policy towards the Soviet Union embraced the following points: "Make no approaches to Russia. Treat any approaches toward us (the USA.—P.S.) with reserve until the Russians satisfied us they were not maneuvering merely to obtain unilateral concessions for themselves."¹ The USA thereby in ad-

¹ *The Memoirs of C. Hull*, Vol. II, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1948, pp. 972-73.

vance erected barriers to the Soviet Union's efforts to improve relations with it.

Throughout the initial period of the Second World War the Anglo-French coalition neither offered nor tried to offer the Soviet Union any alternative to Nazi aggression, an alternative that could be more acceptable to the USSR in terms of ensuring its security than a policy of neutrality and non-involvement in the imperialist war. This is an indisputable piece of historical reality. On the contrary, judging by their actions and not by their listless declarations, Britain, France (until its defeat), and the USA pursued a harder policy towards the USSR during the period of the "phony war" and, in many respects, almost until the very outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, than in peacetime.

Germany's imperialist adversaries had no desire whatever for serious political rapprochement with the USSR. They wanted not a neutral Soviet Union, but a Soviet Union that would bear most of the burden of the war against Germany and divert the Third Reich from its war against the West. In London, Paris (until the defeat of France) and Washington they realised that a political rapprochement with the USSR prior to the start of Germany's "crusade" against the East could inhibit the realisation of the Nazi's aggressive plans, if not frustrate them altogether, and they therefore ruled out such rapprochement so as to encourage Hitler to attack the USSR. In the broader context this strategy by the Western imperialist circles was very much consonant with the Munich political line.

FOR SECURITY ALONG THE USSR'S FRONTIERS

A key aim of Soviet foreign policy in the initial period of the Second World War was to ensure the security of all Soviet state frontiers, notably in Europe, maintaining corresponding relations with neighbouring countries. Soviet diplomacy tackled these tasks as part of the entire spectrum of problems in the USSR's relations with the two imperialist groups.

Growing anti-Soviet feeling and aspirations among the ruling quarters in some neighbouring states were a distinctive feature of the early period of the Second World War. In 1939-1941 there was a dramatic rise in the impact of all the negative factors arising out of the fact that the USSR was encircled by

hostile capitalist countries. The situation bore out the forecast made by Lenin in 1919, when he said: "I have not the slightest doubt that further attempts will be made by the Entente to set against us now one, now another of the small states that are our neighbours. Such attempts will occur because the small states are wholly dependent on the Entente, because all this talk about freedom, independence and democracy is sheer hypocrisy, and the Entente may compel them once again to raise their hand against us."¹ Britain's and France's imperialist adversaries, Germany and Italy, acted in the same anti-Soviet key. To one extent or another, practically all of the Soviet Union's neighbours in the northwest, west, southwest, and south were dependent on the leading imperialist powers. Whenever any of them tried to pursue a more balanced policy towards the USSR they promptly came under strong pressure from the imperialist coalitions, pushing them into worsening their relations or even into a confrontation with the USSR.

Thus, expressing the opinion of Finnish reactionaries, Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, who was President of Finland in 1931-1937, laid down the following guideline: "...any enemy of Russia must always be a friend of Finland."² In Helsinki they rejected as fundamentally unacceptable the only reasonable alternative, namely, the promotion of friendly relations with their great eastern neighbour on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Anti-Soviet elements in Finland actively drew closer to countries which at that stage were hostile towards the USSR. An analogous posture was adopted by the ruling quarters in bourgeois-landowner Poland, which suffered a crushing military defeat, and by the leaders of bourgeois-landowner Romania. Statements to the effect that Romania was an "unsheathed sword ready to defend the old continent" followed one another out of the royal palace in Bucharest.³

The question of military bridgeheads against the USSR was

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets. December 5-9, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1965, p. 217.

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D (1937-1945)*, Vol. V, Washington, 1953, p. 536.

³ N. I. Lebedev, *The Iron Guard, Carol II and Hitler (From the History of Romanian Fascism, the Monarchy, and Its Foreign Policy of "Playing on Two Tables")*, Moscow, 1968; N. I. Lebedev, *The Downfall of Fascism in Romania*, Moscow, 1976 (both in Russian).

paramount in the anti-Soviet plans of the imperialist powers. Nazi Germany acquired such a bridgehead in the west as early as September 1939, after crushing bourgeois-landowner Poland, and then assiduously sought to expand it by drawing the Soviet Union's neighbours in the northwest and southwest (Finland, Romania, and Bulgaria) into its military-political orbit. For its part, the Anglo-French coalition, which had no common frontier with the USSR, concentrated on creating "sores" for the USSR wherever possible, shifting the focus of their anti-Soviet activities to the countries bordering on the USSR.

In the period of the "phoney war" Soviet foreign policy actions to the west and northwest of its European frontiers were motivated chiefly by the need to reinforce the country's security in the face of Nazi Germany's presence on the Soviet western frontiers as a result of the overrunning of bourgeois Poland. In this situation it was also crucial to prevent Germany from seizing the territory of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, which had been torn away from Soviet Russia in 1920. It was vital to reduce the possibility of the Nazi threat spreading also to the Baltic. The treaties of mutual assistance that the USSR signed with the Baltic states were directed largely towards one of the aims that the Soviet government had sought to achieve at the Anglo-French-Soviet talks in the summer of 1939, namely, greater security in the Baltic region. Since both the British and the French refused to join in organised resistance to the aggressor in this part of Europe, Soviet diplomacy steadfastly worked to attain this objective by means of bilateral relations with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The resultant treaties upset the calculations of the Western powers that Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia would let Hitler use their territory as a passageway for an invasion of the USSR and even take part in that invasion.

Problems linked to Soviet-Finnish relations, especially in view of the attempts of both imperialist groups to use the militarist mood of the then Finnish leadership to create a war threat on the Soviet Union's northwestern frontier in the period of the "phoney war" in Europe, were also in the focus of Soviet foreign policy. It was the USSR's belief that problems could and should be settled by, above all, peaceful, political means, and that every possibility opened up by diplomacy had to be used to this end.

Had it not been for the hostile influence of the imperialist powers, which egged Finland's ruling quarters into a confrontation with the USSR, it is not to be ruled out that the USSR and Finland would have reached a mutual understanding by peaceful means.

In London and Paris, as well as in Washington, it was expected that a military conflict between Finland and the USSR could open up the long-sought opportunity for organising an attack on the USSR by the entire imperialist camp. Since, on account of the Soviet Union's resolute actions, nothing came of their calculations on a military clash between the USSR and Germany in the west in September 1939, their search for ways of dragging the USSR into a big war and for new bridgeheads against the USSR shifted to the northwest. With pressure from the imperialist powers intensifying, the Finnish government showed no willingness for a mutually-acceptable peaceful settlement and tried to get unilateral concessions from the USSR. Military-political developments which showed that Finland would be inescapably defeated brought the Finnish side round to seeing the need for a peaceful settlement.

The notorious stories about the "division" of Poland, the "Sovietisation" of the Baltic region, and "aggression" against Finland are refuted by the sober assessments of leading bourgeois political personalities, publicists, and historians. For instance, recalling the years 1939-1941 Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was President of Finland, noted: "For a period of more than ten recent years the Soviet leaders stressed to us that peace had to be preserved in this region. In their proposals and requests they pointed out that it was necessary to ensure the security of the country and remove the possibility of aggression through Finland."¹ Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, who succeeded Paasikivi as President of Finland, said in 1964: "If today, two decades later, we try to put ourselves in the position of the Soviet Union, we shall be able, in the light of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, to understand the concern that the USSR could not but feel relative to its security at the close of the 1930s."²

¹ *The Paasikivi Line. Articles and Speeches by Juho Kusti Paasikivi. 1944-1956*, Moscow, 1958, p. 139 (Russian translation).

² Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, *Friendship and Goodneighbourly Relations. Speeches and Statements, 1963-1967*, Moscow, 1968, p. 36 (Russian translation).

A complex area for Soviet foreign policy was the struggle for security in the southwest and the Balkans, where Soviet diplomacy sought to counter the anti-Sovietism in the policies of the ruling circles of Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, combining this with efforts to establish with these countries not only constructive relations but also relations of friendship based on mutual security, equality, and the settlement of outstanding problems. Of course, the USSR took a differentiated approach to each of these countries.

Although the southern approaches to the USSR were geographically remote from the European theatre, where the main events of the world war unfolded and from where the greatest danger emanated to the vital interests of the USSR, the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government attached considerable significance to the development of the Soviet Union's relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Soviet diplomacy followed, with unrelaxed attention, the intensive anti-Soviet game played in these countries by the two imperialist coalitions, took every possible counter-measure to prevent these southern neighbours of the USSR from being used to the detriment of its security, and consistently pursued a line aimed at restraining and limiting anti-Soviet manifestations in the policies of the ruling quarters in these countries. The southern direction of Soviet diplomacy was by no means of a purely "restraining", defensive character. On the contrary, the USSR worked towards its aims with resolution, suggesting to Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan a comprehensive programme for strengthening goodneighbourly relations on the basis of mutual security.

One of the most important areas of Soviet diplomatic activity in the initial period of the Second World War were the efforts to ensure the USSR's security in the Far East. There Soviet diplomacy was faced with the task of using the results of its actions on the eve of the Second World War, when it succeeded in keeping the USSR uninvolved in war with Germany in Europe and with Japan in the Far East. In practical terms, what Soviet diplomacy had to do was: first, prevent Japanese aggression against the USSR; second, use inter-imperialist contradictions to prevent the consolidation of both imperialist groups on an anti-Soviet basis; third, continue the line of extending support to China in the Sino-Japanese war, keeping a vigilant eye

on the attempts of the then Chinese leadership to provoke war between the USSR and Japan; fourth, as far as possible to weaken, again using the inter-imperialist contradictions, the anti-Soviet aspects of the expanding cooperation between Japan and nazi Germany.

Central to the USSR's approach to militarist Japan, to the problem of containing and preventing Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union, was the effort to blunt the threat from Japanese militarism by political means and, as far as possible, secure more constructive relations with Japan in combination with a firm rebuff to Tokyo's anti-Sovietism in all its manifestations. By counterposing this line to the policies of Japan's rulers, Soviet diplomacy effectively countered the creation of a "Far Eastern front" against the USSR.

AN IMPERIALIST PLOT WAS NOT RULED OUT: SECRET DIPLOMACY

The international situation of the early period of the Second World War was such that up to and even after the disastrous defeat of the Anglo-French coalition in the summer of 1940 the Soviet government could not entirely ignore the possibility of an anti-Soviet deal between the belligerent imperialist coalitions. In Marshal of the Soviet Union V. I. Chuikov's reminiscences we find what J. V. Stalin told him in the autumn of 1940: "'Do not imagine,' he (Stalin.-P.S.) said, 'that after France's defeat the Western conciliators will depart from the scene. Even now, in this difficult time for the British people, appeasers of the aggressor are rushing back and forth between Berlin and London. They are prepared to make new concessions at any time, provided the aggressor turns his arms against the Soviet Union.'"¹

The very attitude adopted by Britain and France to the war after September 1, 1939, eloquently pointed to the fact that the hopes for a "real war" breaking out against the Soviet Union were still very much alive. The nazis were invited, as it were, to continue developing aggression in the direction of the Soviet Union. The French journalist Ronald Dorgelès was astounded

¹ V. I. Chuikov, "Mission in China", *Novy mir*, No. 11, 1979, p. 202.

by what was taking place on the Western front: "Artillerymen deployed along the Rhine were calmly watching German ammunition trains running on the opposite bank, and our airmen were flying over the smoking chimneys of the Saar factories without dropping bombs. The High Command's main preoccupation was obviously to avoid provoking the enemy."¹ In the work entitled *Le drame de 1940*, the French researcher and general A. Beaufre wrote that in the Allied armies the war had begun to seem to be a "colossal scenario of tacit conciliation, under which nothing especial could happen if we properly played our part. In French and British military quarters it was expected that the political leadership would ultimately reach a compromise with Germany."²

The French historian Beau de Loménie acknowledges that although France was in a state of war with Germany, the operations of the French troops against the Wehrmacht were a "wretched travesty of an offensive", a "vacillating, timid game". In essence, the French government and military leadership were continuing the former Munich line under conditions of war.³

Meanwhile, the Anglo-French leadership was engaged in backstage manoeuvres in many capitals of the world. For example, with Italian mediation France was sounding the possibility of ending the war with Germany as early as September 1939. On September 16, the French ambassador in Rome André François-Poncet told Galeazzo Ciano, then the Italian Foreign Minister, that if upon the completion of the Polish campaign Hitler were to offer "reasonable" proposals for peace he could recommend that his government should consider the possibility of an agreement with Hitler. In September 1939, the German envoy in Luxembourg Otto von Radowitz was informed that the French Foreign Ministry wanted an "honourable peace" with Germany. Pope Pius XII joined in the peace soundings in December 1939. The governments of the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Norway, and Finland offered themselves to both sides as mediators. In November 1939 King Leopold III of Belgium and

¹ Ronald Dorgelès, *La drôle de guerre. 1939-1940*, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1957, p. 9.

² André Beaufre, op. cit., p. 198.

³ E. Beau de Loménie, *Les responsabilités des dynasties bourgeoises*, Vol. V, *Le Hitler à Pétain*, Editions Denoel, Paris, 1973.

Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands urged Britain, France, and Germany to conclude peace.

The machinery of secret diplomacy was working at full capacity. On the basis of new archival materials the Soviet researcher L. A. Bezymensky writes: "It has now been established that immediately following the attack on Poland Hitler, Göring, and Canaris began a broad offensive on the 'secret front', their objectives being: first, to restore all prewar channels of communications with Britain; second, to sound how serious Britain's going over was to the camp of Germany's undisguised adversaries. For this purpose they mobilised all their forces, including Johan Birger Dahlerus in Sweden, Franz von Papen in Turkey, the Belgian king, who was under German surveillance, and some other emissaries. For example, Dahlerus was received by Hitler and Göring and given a programme for separate talks with Britain. Here we shall make only one observation: in the series of secret contacts of June-August 1939 the initiative was taken mainly by the British side, whose proposals were rejected by Hitler, but the situation was now reversed, with the initiative coming from the Reich Chancellery."¹

Influent quarters in the USA looked for wide-ranging mutual understanding with Nazi Germany. In early October 1939 W. R. Davis, an American oil magnate, who told the White House he was willing to act as a mediator between the belligerents, had meetings with Göring. The same subject was discussed at several meetings between Göring and James D. Mooney, head of the General Motors Overseas Corporation. At these talks Göring put the idea to the Americans of organising a meeting between representatives of Britain, France, and Germany. Minister Without Portfolio Hjalmar Schacht, for his part, asked the US ambassador in Berlin Hugh Wilson to pass on to Franklin D. Roosevelt a request for mediation between the belligerents. These explorative contacts with the Nazis were joined also by the Swedish industrialist and friend of Göring's Johan Birger Dahlerus, to whom Hitler expressed his willingness to establish friendly relations with Britain and guarantee its security. They

¹ L. A. Bezymensky, "Secret Diplomacy of Prince Hohenlohe (From the History of the Backstage Talks Between Nazi Germany and the Western Powers)", *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, No. 1, 1980, p. 133.

were also joined by the former Supreme Commissar of the League of Nations in Danzig, the Swiss diplomat and scholar Carl Jacob Burckhardt and representatives of some neutral countries.¹

Prince Max Hohenlohe, who had the confidence of the highest political quarters in the Third Reich and had for several years been a Berlin emissary in the most important secret diplomatic missions, started seriously to sound out the possibility for a deal between Britain and Germany at the close of 1939 and in early 1940. The British had expected this overture. The British envoy in Switzerland David V. Kelly recalls: "Before I left London I had been given orally and very secretly by Sir Robert (later Lord) Vansittart, who was adviser to the Secretary of State but no longer Permanent Under-Secretary, the names of two Germans to whom I might listen if they ever approached me. Some time in June, the former Swiss Minister in London, M. Paravicini, after ascertaining that I had no objection, invited me to visit him after nightfall to meet Prince Hohenlohe, who... was one of the Germans I had been authorized to meet if he wished..."

"This was the first of three or four visits to Switzerland to see me, all within the period of five or six weeks before the Battle of Britain..."

"Put briefly, the message he professed to bring from Hitler was always the same, though with an increasing note of urgency. Hitler did not wish to touch Britain or the British Empire (though a deal over one of the old German colonies would be helpful); nor to ask for any reparations; his sole condition was that we should make peace and leave him a completely free hand in Europe."²

The American Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles toured Europe in February-March 1940 and in a meeting with him the French Premier Edouard Daladier said he would not refuse to deal with Germany if France were guaranteed against being again involved in war with Germany.³ This tour was undertaken by Sumner Welles as part of a search for possibilities of "appeasing" the aggressor powers. German diplomats reported to

¹ *A History of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, pp. 13-14 (in Russian).

² David Kelly, *The Ruling Few or the Human Background to Diplomacy*, Hollis & Carter, London, 1953, pp. 272-73.

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1940, Vol. 1, p. 64.

Berlin that the USA was suggesting a four-year truce to the belligerents and in the meantime entering into economic negotiations in which "Japan (but not Russia) and Italy would be included".¹ The American efforts to settle the contradictions in Europe were approved in London and Paris. It was intimated to Welles that Britain and France were not ruling out a compromise with the Axis powers.

Virtually in a few days following France's surrender, the German envoy in Bern arrived in the small Swiss town of Gstaad to see Prince Hohenlohe. He brought the Prince a letter from Walter Hewel, who was a key figure in the Third Reich's foreign-policy machine. As the representative of the German Foreign Ministry at Hitler's headquarters Hewel enjoyed the latter's full confidence. The threads of Germany's secret contacts with the Western powers, including the channels opened by Prince Hohenlohe, went through Hewel to Hitler and other Nazi leaders. Hohenlohe later recalled receiving this letter: "The ambassador was in a hurry and I opened the envelope only after he left. It contained a letter. I exactly remember the opening words: 'Main Headquarters of the Führer. Ambassador Hewel.' And further: 'After long consideration the Führer has decided to enter into an alliance with Britain.' Expounding Hitler's idea, Hewel wrote that for Britain the war had been lost and this was its 'last chance' to obtain Germany's guarantees for its empire. I was surprised by the calm tone of the letter and the absence of demands couched in terms of an ultimatum. So far as I can remember, it gave September as the deadline. This proposal had to be accepted before then, otherwise the bombing of Britain would begin. I felt, and I still feel, that this proposal was made in earnest. Let me add that the letter was signed by Hewel and by Gauss, juridical counsellor of the German Foreign Office."²

Kelly's contacts with Hohenlohe were by no means momentary, especially as others were involved. Carl Jacob Burckhardt went to Berlin in June 1940 where he had political talks, following which he called on Kelly in Bern to inform him that Hitler wanted an armistice with Britain on the following terms:

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, 1954, p. 771.

² Quoted from L. A. Bezymensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-35.

Germany's recognition as a world power; the return of the colonies; guarantees of the British Empire's inviolability. Kelly reported this to London, where it was interpreted by Lord Halifax as an official proposal.

Burckhardt and then Kelly were notified of his reaction. In reporting Kelly's reply Hohenlohe informed Hewel that the British envoy considered Hitler to be a "great man" but that Britain did not trust German promises. Hohenlohe immediately got in touch with the Vatican, requesting Pope Pius XII to contact Roosevelt and get him to mediate peace.

A major operation to conclude a deal between Britain and Germany was undertaken six weeks before the Great Patriotic War broke out. On May 10, 1941, Rudolph Hess, the second in the Nazi party hierarchy after Hitler, flew from Augsburg to Britain in an Me-110 fighter plane allegedly "on purely personal initiative". A few days before taking off Hess was instructed by Hitler to make "no oppressive demands" of England. Hess set out the terms for an Anglo-German peace at a meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer John Simon and a Foreign Office representative Iven Kirkpatrick, who received the Nazi in their official capacities. In exchange for ending the state of war and guaranteeing the inviolability of the British colonial empire Berlin wanted London to recognise German hegemony in Europe and to return all the former German colonies. In the event the British refused, Hess threatened, it would face an intensification of the war in the air and at sea.¹ These German terms were in fact not new. As regards their volume, it is not likely that Berlin felt they were too unrealistic. After all, in the many years of his relations with Britain Hitler had grown accustomed to expecting nothing but concessions to his growing claims.

A few days later, Hess' appearance in Britain was publicly announced and this was taken by the Nazi leadership to mean that his mission had failed. The Third Reich's propaganda machine went into action at once. Hess was disavowed and declared a lunatic. But the fact is that Hess' mission was evidence that Berlin had not abandoned its hopes of reaching a compro-

¹ *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. VII, Nuremberg, 1947, pp. 138-45.

mise with its imperialist adversary before attacking the USSR.

No political deal was made, as none had been made in previous political contacts of this kind between the two imperialist coalitions—the rivals did not agree about price. The Nazis demanded much more than was acceptable to the other side. One way or another, there was an undisputed common denominator in all these contacts: neither Britain, nor France, nor the USA, nor the different mediators ever attempted to prevent the Nazi leadership from carrying out its anti-Soviet plans in the East.

4. INGREDIENTS OF A LIE

Any analysis of Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s and the 1940s should give scrupulous attention to a retrospective consideration of developments. The productiveness of this policy can best be judged by comparing the scale and character of international tasks in a specific historical situation with the actual possibilities obtaining at the time for accomplishing them.

The zeal of bourgeois political thought in distorting the true picture of international development in the early period of the Second World War, particularly Soviet foreign policy, is a derivative of the broad political aim to which it is subordinated, namely, to whitewash imperialism, to absolve it from the responsibility for unleashing and spreading the war, and impute this responsibility to the USSR.

On the one hand, Western historians and politicians are especially anxious to justify the gross setback suffered by the policy of the Anglo-French coalition in 1939-1941. They cannot forgive the USSR its consistency in championing security with a view to safeguarding and reinforcing its positions. Put briefly, the charge against the USSR is that it refused to serve the interests of the imperialist camp, that it made skilful use of inter-imperialist contradictions to advance the cause of socialism and peace, that it refused to fall for provocations and adventurism and make itself vulnerable to a strike by aggressive powers. But this is, as it has always been, the strong side of socialism's foreign policy that enables it to get the better of its class adversaries.

On the other hand, the heightened attention given in the West to the early period of the Second World War is motivated by

the desire to find some "arguments" in history to prove that Soviet foreign policy is always "aggressive" and "immoral", to portray the USSR as an "imperialist" power and thereby substantiate modern imperialism's principal propaganda lie about a "Soviet threat" and prejudice the Soviet Union's prestige in the world.

Since these purely class aims cannot be achieved honestly, and supported by facts, all the greater is the lie to which the falsifiers are compelled to have recourse. The political palette of their falsifications is extremely broad, including charges like "conspiring" with the nazis, "reluctance" to cooperate with Germany's imperialist adversaries, "connivance" at German aggression, "menacing" neighbouring states, "economic aid" to Germany, and even an "interest" in a "preventive war" against Germany and its allies.

THE MYTH OF "SOVIET RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR"

More frequently than not the conceptual-methodological foundation of bourgeois falsifications is the "theory of political realism" with the central thesis that in world politics all the actions of any nation are determined by strength and the struggle for power. For example, a voluminous study published in the FRG in 1973 under the title *A History of Germany Since the First World War* gives the following interpretation of the motives that allegedly guided the foreign policy actions of the USSR, Britain, France, and Germany in the initial period of the Second World War: "The war in Europe, at any rate from the moment it was entered by the two Western powers, was not only over territories, frontiers, and state existence of Poland but over the principle that would underlie the order in Europe: hegemony or equilibrium."¹ This interpretation suits bourgeois historians in the first place because it enables them to entirely emasculate the substance of the contradictions between the two groups of imperialist states and replace a concrete historico-

¹ *Deutsche Geschichte seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vol. II, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1973, p. 9.

economic analysis with an abstract pattern of struggle to preserve or change the "balance of power".

This method of bourgeois historiography proves to be even more "productive" when it is applied to an analysis of Soviet foreign policy during the first phase of the war, for it offers "theoretical" justification for the attempts to bracket the USSR not only with Britain and France but also with nazi Germany, since all were, in the long run, "equally" motivated by one and the same "drive for power". And, of course, the entire range of Soviet foreign policy activity—its aims, principles, overall conception, individual directions of diplomatic activity, and so on—is misrepresented. But the sought-for goal is "achieved"—the responsibility for the outbreak and spread of the Second World War is shared out "equally" and all the steps taken by the USSR to counter aggression are discounted.

The contention that all countries, whether socialist or capitalist, invariably seek to expand their influence on the international scene, is used for an analysis of Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941 by, among others, the West German historian Philipp W. Fabry. He asserts that the principal aim of Soviet diplomacy was by no means to counter expanding nazi aggression but to create a counter-weight to Britain by broadening cooperation with and strengthening Germany. Fabry writes: "For the Kremlin the issue was not even Germany but the maintenance of the power balance in Western and Central Europe. As long as it existed the Soviet Union would be the decisive factor in any conflict of the relevant magnitude."¹ Enlarging upon this thesis in another book, he maintains that Hitler's conquest of some West European countries, particularly the aggression in the Balkans, was all but "welcomed" by the Soviet leadership.² Everything is simple, if Fabry's logic is accepted: the nazi aggression weakened Britain's positions and, consequently, strengthened the positions of the USSR, and for that reason the Soviet Union had allegedly steadfastly pursued the purpose of "expanding the war". The Soviet Union's efforts to prevent the spread of the

¹ Philipp W. Fabry, *Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt. 1939-1941*, Fundus Verlag, Darmstadt, 1962, p. 164.

² Philipp W. Fabry, *Die Sowjetunion und das Dritte Reich. Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen von 1933 bis 1941*, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1971, pp. 145, 290.

war and its long and consistent opposition to nazi aggression are thus given out for something quite different.

Reality is falsified also by the historian Sven Allard of West Germany. He does not feel it necessary to conceal his political purpose, which is, in his words, to debunk the idealisation of the Soviet Union and, most particularly, its foreign policy.¹ Allard studiously tries to reduce Soviet foreign policy and its unimpeachable principles and aims to the level of imperialist policy. In order to exonerate the Munich strategy of the Western powers, he makes the charge that the Soviet Union disrupted the talks on collective measures to curb the aggressive plans of nazi Germany. He asserts that it was the Soviet Union's purpose to "drag out the negotiations with the British and French governments to the extent of making it clear to Hitler that agreement with Moscow was the indispensable condition for the realisation of his aggressive plans".² With this argument Allard tries to prove that on the eve and during the initial period of the war Soviet diplomacy was preoccupied with "provoking conflicts between Germany and the Western powers with the Soviet Union looking on from the sidelines".³

This argument is much favoured by present-day bourgeois historiography. Its purpose is to create the impression that the USSR "was not interested" in cutting short nazi aggression. This is typified by the writings of the American historian Louis Fischer.⁴ While he is silent about the US role in promoting the Munich course towards collusion with nazi Germany and encouraging the nazis to attack the USSR, Fischer will have people believe that it was the Soviet Union and not the imperialist powers who conduced to the outbreak of the Second World War. Eric D. Butler, a well-known British historian, argues along the same lines, alleging that the USSR deliberately precipitated war, and when war broke out it had no intention whatever of opposing nazi aggression, which "the Communists confidently

¹ Sven Allard, *Stalin und Hitler. Die sowjetrussische Aussenpolitik. 1930-1941*, Francke Verlag, Bern, 1974, pp. 106, 107.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 148.

⁴ Louis Fischer, *Russia's Road from Peace to War. Soviet Foreign Relations. 1917-1941*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1969.

believed could be used to expand their revolutionary strategy".¹

The magnitude of the calamity experienced by the world in 1939-1945 compels Western historiography to give as little attention as possible to the study of the lost opportunity—a timely alliance with the USSR against the aggressors—and use the blanket camouflage that "the policy of peace as a whole" had suffered fiasco. Thus, repeating an idea widespread in the West, the US historian A.F.K. Organski writes: "Indeed, it took a madman to start World War II... England and France were extremely concerned to preserve world peace in the years before World War II, so much so that they refused to understand the clear meaning of many of Germany's actions."²

THE "COLLUSION WITH NAZI GERMANY" MYTH

John Lewis Gaddis, a distinguished American historian, has this comment: "The Munich agreement of September 1938 represented the triumph of a widely shared view that communism was at least as dangerous as fascism, if not more so. It was a view which was to persist until Hitler's violation of that agreement six months later made his ultimate intentions clear. But by that time the Soviet Union had decided that, in the absence of cooperation from the West, the best chance of preventing war lay in collaboration with Hitler, not resistance to him."³ This last assertion is a falsehood revealing the tendentiousness of his thesis, which is yet another stereotype of bourgeois, especially American, historiography.

Categorically refusing to see that the Soviet-German treaty of non-aggression was signed at a time when collective resistance to fascist aggression had been blocked by the Western powers, the West German historian Johann Wolfgang Brügel asserts that the Soviet Union had turned the non-aggression pact

¹ Eric D. Butler, *The Red Pattern of World Conquest*, New Times Ltd., London, 1968, p. 34.

² A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1958, pp. 61-62.

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union and the United States: An Interpretive History*, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1978, p. 138.

signed with the Third Reich into a friendship treaty.¹ And further: "Actually, Moscow's neutrality provided Hitler with a safe rear and enabled him to start the Second World War."² The fact that for the Soviet Union it was necessary to win time to be better prepared for resistance to aggression is cynically discounted by Brügel as "not deserving credence".³ He goes so far as to declare that for the USSR there had never been the prospect of war with Germany.

The ideological slant of this widespread Western argument is obvious. It is trumpeted that had it not been for the Soviet posture, Germany would not have risked starting the war and, consequently, the responsibility for the war rests with the Soviet Union. There is thus the omission of the immutable historical reality that the Second World War broke out after the Anglo-French coalition had refused to combine its forces with those of the Soviet Union to give a concerted rebuff to fascist aggression. There is thus a silence about the subsequent activities of the Western ruling quarters to turn the spearhead of the Nazi aggression against the USSR, to drag it into war and themselves take a ringside seat as an "applauding spectator".

The endless talk in the West about an "alliance" between the USSR and Germany based on an agreement to divide spheres of influence in Europe⁴ is directly connected with the charge that the Soviet Union "was responsible" for the outbreak of the Second World War. This is the yardstick used by bourgeois historiography—both traditional and modern—in assessing the steps that were taken by the USSR to strengthen its western frontiers, to liberate the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, to sign treaties of mutual assistance with the three Baltic states, as well as its steps in connection with the Soviet-Finnish conflict, and much else.

Many American, British, French, and West German historians not only bracket the Nazi aggression in Western Europe with the USSR's measures to ensure its security, but go so far as to assert that these measures were put into effect with advance

¹ Johann Wolfgang Brügel, *Stalin und Hitler. Pakt gegen Europa*, Europa-Verlag, Vienna, 1973, p. 7.

² Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴ Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: the German Defeat in the East*, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1968, p. 24.

agreement with Germany. This argument is fundamentally at odds with logic if only in terms of elementary political geography. All of the Soviet Union's measures were implemented in the zone of Germany's expansion and were clearly of an anti-Nazi orientation. It was clearly not against France, situated on the opposite side of the European continent, or insular Britain, or much less the USA that the USSR moved its armed forces 250-350 kilometres to the west in September 1939. "The Soviet Union's consistent and determined stand upset the plans of the imperialists to seize advantageous bridgeheads for a war against it. The state frontier was moved away from key administrative and industrial centres of the European part of the USSR and this placed the USSR in a better position strategically."¹

One of the pillars of the "Soviet-German collusion" lie is the misrepresentation of Soviet-German economic relations in 1939-1941. These relations are described as "collaboration", the alleged direct outcome of which was a dramatic growth of Germany's military-industrial potential and the creation of conditions for the active pursuit of its aggression in the West. For instance, Klaus Hildebrand maintains: "The military supplies from Russia to the Third Reich helped to end Germany's dependence on foreign raw materials and food."²

The content of "theories" of this kind makes one wonder if their proponents are all that informed of what they write.

"PREVENTIVE WAR" AND "RED EXPANSIONISM"

To justify the sneak attack on the USSR, bourgeois historiography has long had recourse to the legend about a "preventive war": it is alleged that the war against the USSR was started by the Nazis to "forestall" Soviet aggression against Germany and other West European countries. This is the message of the specially selected and tailored documents brought out by the US State Department in 1948 in a volume entitled *Nazi-Soviet*

¹ *The Soviet Armed Forces. A History*, Moscow, 1978, p. 225 (in Russian); also see Chapter 2 of this book.

² Klaus Hildebrand, *Deutsche Außenpolitik. 1933-1945*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1971, p. 95.

Relations. 1939-1941. The political purpose of this publication was to justify the nazi regime's invasion of the USSR. Analogous motivations guided the compilers of the volume *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Dokumenten* (Bd. 1-3, München, 1953-1956) published in the FRG, and of some other volumes of documents printed in the West. The existence of this "broad" base gave birth to a large number of bourgeois "studies" disseminating the thesis that the Soviet Union pursued an "aggressive policy" in Europe and that Hitler and his associates built up and trained armed forces to invade the Soviet Union allegedly "in response to the Soviet threat".¹ The purely defensive measures taken by the USSR in the face of the growing nazi threat were described as "offensive" and even "aggressive", while the diplomatic struggle and efforts to avoid war were interpreted as "cold calculation".

These "arguments" are eloquent evidence of how close their advocates are to the nazi political line.

Precisely these "arguments" were used by Ribbentrop to explain the German invasion in a memorandum that was handed to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin on June 22, 1941, when German troops had already crossed into Soviet territory. The memorandum claimed that the Soviet government sought to undermine Germany from within, that it was preparing to seize and Bolshevise West European states, invade the Balkans, capture the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and so on and so forth. This astonishing slander ended with the assertion that the Soviet government could be expected to perpetrate aggression against Germany at any time. This "dangerous situation", the Ribbentrop memorandum lied, was what compelled the nazi government to forestall a Soviet invasion of Germany and thus begin a "preventive war".

For nazi propaganda this story became the official justification for the invasion of the USSR. Hans Fritzsche, one of Goebbels' top aides, admitted at the Nuremberg trial: "...after the attack on the Soviet Union it was the main task of German propaganda to justify the necessity of this attack. Therefore we had to em-

¹ Walter Görlitz, *Der deutsche Generalstab*, Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte, Frankfurt on Main, 1953; *Germany and the Soviet Union. 1939-1941*, Leiden, 1954.

phasise again and again that we had merely prevented a Soviet attack ... the next task for propaganda was to show that not Germany but Russia was guilty of this war."¹

Throughout the war nazi propaganda kept repeating this "explanation" of what led to the war. It is noteworthy that the "preventive war" theory was used as the basis for the plea for the nazi General Staff by the defence lawyers and defendants at the Nuremberg trial. General-Fieldmarshal Wilhelm Keitel, a major war criminal, claimed at the trial that all the preparations made in Germany until the spring of 1941 were defensive—against a possible attack by the Red Army. Thus, he declared, the entire war in the East could be called preventive to a certain extent. Analogous "explanations" were offered by Göring and other chief German war criminals at Nuremberg.

Actually, the only premise the architects of German aggression against the USSR could go by was that the Soviet Union was giving Germany no cause for so-called "preventive measures". Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff, made the following entry in his diary on July 22, 1940: "...there are no indications of Russian activity against us."² This was also the gist of reports to Berlin from the German ambassador in Moscow Count Friedrich Werner von Schulenburg, the German military attache Lieutenant-General Ernst Köstring, and his deputy Colonel von Krebs.

Nevertheless, the charge that in 1939-1941 the USSR had "expansionist intentions" is used by the American historian Trevor Nevitt Dupuy in the book *The Military Life of Adolf Hitler* (1969) in order to depict the USSR as a potential aggressor. Kurt Assmann, Helmut Krausnick, and other West German historians disseminate this fable with the charge of "Red imperialism". Assmann, for instance, asserts that from the standpoint of future developments Hitler had correctly assessed the situation. In *Strategy. The Indirect Approach* the British historian B. H. Liddell Hart says that by continuing the war with Britain,

¹ *The Trial of German Major War Criminals: Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal Sitting at Nuremberg, Germany*, Pt. 17, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1948, p. 295.

² Generaloberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, Vol. II, *Von der geplanten Landung in England bis zum Beginn des Ostfeldzuges* (1.7. 1940-21.6.1941), W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 32.

Germany would be exposed to a fatal attack in the back from Russia. The American professor Louis Fischer's book *Russia's Road from Peace to War* (1969) portrays Soviet foreign policy in 1917-1941 as one of expansion in all directions.¹

The "preventive war" legend is willingly disseminated by neo-Nazi publicists. An example is Helmut Sündermann, who in 1966 published a book under the title of *Deutsche Notizen 1945/1965*.

Today, decades after the Great Patriotic War, the world public is able to draw upon a colossal archive of documents that show beyond the shadow of a doubt that Nazi Germany's invasion of the USSR was deliberate and meticulously planned. It would be absurd to ignore irrefutable facts. In a book entitled 1939-1945. *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten* the West German historian Hans-Adolf Jacobsen writes: "All the 'preventive war' legends still current must be dispersed: Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 ... was not a preventive war. Hitler's decision to start the invasion was not motivated by concern about any imminent formidable strike by the Soviet Union; it was the ultimate expression of his aggressive policies, which were increasingly stripped of all camouflage from 1938 onward."² Another West German historian, Andreas Hillgruber, writes in his book *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung. 1940-1941* that the invasion of the USSR was not a response to any serious threat from the Red Army; on the contrary, Hitler and the entire German General Staff had no reason to see an adversary in the Red Army. It is the author's opinion that Hitler's obsession to destroy the USSR was the main line of his general policy ever since he came to power in 1933, while Case "Barbarossa" was the implementation of his programme, the consummation of all the preceding steps along the road to this objective.³

The legends about Germany's "preventive war" against the USSR, "Red imperialism", and "Soviet expansionism" have a close class affinity to the present "basic" theses of bourgeois

political ideology, notably the "Soviet military threat" myth. These legends are part of the unrelenting efforts of the Western ideologists to conceal their own imperialist aims. Attempts of this kind were started from the moment the Great October Socialist Revolution triumphed. "Whenever the imperialists need to cover up their aggressive schemes," the 24th Congress of the CPSU pointed out, "they try to revive the 'Soviet menace' myth."⁴

¹ Quoted from P. A. Zhilin, *Problems of Military History*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 199-202, 206-12 (in Russian).

² Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, 1939-1945. *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, Wehr und Wissen Verlagsgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1961, p. 680.

³ Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung. 1940-1941*, Bernard und Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, Frankfurt am Main, 1965.

⁴ 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, March 30 April 9, 1971, *Documents*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1971, p. 36.

Chapter 2 IN THE WEST AND NORTHWEST

In the period of the "phoney war", since September 1939, great changes that affected the Soviet Union's vital interests took place along its western, northwestern, and southwestern frontiers. On its western frontier the situation changed radically in the very first weeks of September 1939.

On the one hand, the Polish bourgeois-landowner state was rapidly crushed by Germany and, as a result, the strongest military power of the imperialist world appeared on the Soviet Union's western frontiers. The nazis thus came into possession of a huge springboard, extending for more than 1,000 kilometres from north to south, for aggression against the USSR. On the other hand, by the summer of 1940, fundamental changes had taken place in the situation in the Baltic region, where, as a result of revolutionary actions by the working people, socialist revolutions triumphed and Soviet power was restored in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The Baltic republics dropped out of the capitalist system and were admitted into the USSR. Lastly, in the northwest of the USSR the relations with Finland deteriorated to the point where they erupted into a major armed conflict. With the situation in a state of flux in all these regions Soviet diplomacy had to work extremely hard.

1. ANXIOUS MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 1939

DISASTROUS COURSE OF ANTI-SOVIETISM

In those years the USSR's frontier with its biggest Western neighbour, bourgeois-landowner Poland, was 1,400 kilometres

long. Poland's strategic importance was of special significance to Soviet security. However, as a rule, during the period between the two world wars Soviet-Polish relations were not friendly. The Soviet Union sought to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations with Poland. But the proposals for building up goodneighbourly relations were invariably rejected by Poland's bourgeois-landowner rulers.

Józef Pilsudski, Poland's actual head of state for many years, was rabidly anti-Soviet. "In foreign affairs," writes the British researcher Antony Polonsky, "Pilsudski continued to see Russia as Poland's main enemy and failed to appreciate the danger created by the rise of Hitler."¹

German diplomacy spared no effort to reinforce the anti-Soviet feelings of the Polish leaders. In Berlin they knew that anti-Sovietism was blindfolding Warsaw's outlook and dulling its sense of danger emanating from nazi Germany. To sustain this atmosphere Hitler invited the Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck to Berchtesgaden on January 5, 1939. Beck was received with pomp and ceremony. He left flattered, frightened, and deceived. The French ambassador in Warsaw Léon Noël wrote that Hitler had put special emphasis on the "complete community of German and Polish interests relative to Russia". He argued that because of the "threat from Russia" a strong Poland was vital to Germany, adding that "every Polish division brought into action against Russia saves a German division".² This is exactly what Poland's rulers wanted to hear. Beck had formulated his political credo back in 1934 as hatred for Russia, a hatred for which he could not find adequate epithets.³

Poland's rulers refused even to consider the idea of an equitable defensive alliance with the USSR that could guarantee Poland's freedom and independence. And this in spite of the fact that their military-strategic plans for the event of war with Germany were based on the belief that it was unrealistic to fight such a war singlehanded. In bourgeois Warsaw they set their

¹ Antony Polonsky, *The Little Dictators. The History of Eastern Europe since 1918*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975, p. 40.

² Léon Noël, *L'agression allemande contre la Pologne*, Flammarion, Paris, 1946, p. 285.

³ I. Androsov, *At the Crossroads of Three Strategies*, Moscow, 1979, p. 80 (in Russian).

hopes mainly on assistance from the Western Allies. They banked on Britain and France striking at Germany from the west, while the Polish army conducted an offensive in the direction of Berlin.

The Polish Communists were the only people in the country who correctly, in keeping with Poland's national interests, understood the importance of cooperation with the USSR to Poland's security, showed that Soviet policy was a genuine policy of peace, and pointed to the menace that fascism was bringing to all nations. Advanced by the Communist Party of Poland, the idea of defending Poland's independence in alliance with the USSR and other countries threatened by fascism won support among progressive groups, especially in the Polish Socialist Party and the Peasant Party, and among patriotic intellectuals.¹

Anti-Soviet blindness, an astonishing incomprehension of the reality of the overhanging threat, and the total discrepancy between the policies of the ruling quarters and the interests of the Polish people conspicuously manifested themselves in these policies in the summer of 1939, when the Anglo-Soviet-French talks were being held in Moscow. As part of its efforts to create a united front against fascist aggression in Europe the Soviet government offered to safeguard Poland and Romania against nazi aggression. The question of Poland and Romania cooperating with the Soviet Union and permitting Soviet troops to move across their territories in the event of a nazi attack was openly raised in August 1939 at the talks between the military missions of the USSR, Britain, and France.

Although the international situation had changed dramatically, the Polish government reacted negatively to the Soviet call for a joint front against fascist aggression, for putting Germany before the accomplished fact of unity between the armed forces of Poland, the Soviet Union, France, and Britain. The Polish government clung stubbornly to the dogmas of its policy, refusing to consider Soviet participation in joint actions to preserve peace and thereby strengthen Poland's own security. Speaking to the British military attache on August 20, 1939, the Polish Chief of Staff General Wacław Stachiewicz declared that in

¹ *Militant Cooperation Between the Soviet and the Polish Peoples*, Moscow, 1973, pp. 62-63 (in Russian).

no case could admission of Soviet troops into Poland be agreed to.¹ A day earlier, the Foreign Minister Józef Beck had said arrogantly: "We have no military accord with the USSR, nor do we wish to have one."²

Even after the non-aggression treaty with Germany had been signed the Soviet government did not rule out joint action against aggression in the western direction. "The Soviet military mission," said K. Y. Voroshilov in a public statement on August 27, "felt that the USSR, which has no common frontier with the aggressor, could help France, Britain, and Poland only if its troops were permitted to cross Polish territory, for there is no other way Soviet troops can come into contact with the troops of the aggressor."³

Soviet assistance offered to Poland in the event of fascist aggression was rejected.

Thus, on account of the anti-Sovietism of Poland's rulers, the undeniable coincidence of Polish and Soviet interests in the face of fascist aggression did not materialise into mutual commitments. The ruling quarters in bourgeois-landowner Poland were unable to guarantee the existence of the Polish nation.

THE GERMAN-POLISH WAR

On September 1, 1939, without a declaration of war, German troops invaded Poland from the north, south, and west. Right from the beginning this was for Germany a total war, a war of annihilation not only against armed forces but also against the civilian population. The Luftwaffe bombed towns, villages, and roads filled with refugees.

Poland's military situation deteriorated rapidly. The government appealed to France and Britain to honour their promises of military assistance. But this was in vain. In London and Paris they had long ago written Poland off as a victim of the nazis and took consolation from the hope that the invasion of

¹ *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. VII, London, 1953, p. 85.

² Paul Reynaud, *Au coeur de la mêlée (1939-1945)*, Flammarion, Paris, 1951, p. 307.

³ *Documents and Other Materials on the History of Soviet-Polish Relations*, Vol. 7, 1939-1943, Moscow, 1973, p. 176 (in Russian).

Poland would bring the Wehrmacht to Soviet frontiers, and that each kilometre of the Polish army's retreat was bringing nearer the moment Germany would clash with the Soviet Union.

In the evening of September 1, 1939, the British Foreign Office sent Germany a note demanding the termination of hostilities against Poland and warning that Britain intended to fulfil its commitments. Typically, the British ambassador in Berlin Neville Henderson made the reservation that the note was not to be seen as an ultimatum. The French government acted in the same vein. But within 24 hours it became clear to the leaders of the Western powers that further evasion from the commitments given to Poland would discredit Britain and France internationally.

On September 3, 1939, France and Britain declared war on Germany. On that same day, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke on radio, noting that the conflict in Europe did not affect the USA directly but would, one way or another, affect its future. He declared that the USA would stay neutral.

In Nazi Berlin they saw through these declarations, in part on the basis of experience in conducting affairs with the leaders of Britain and France, who had connived at Nazi aggression for a long time. On August 31, 1939, Franz Halder, Chief of the Wehrmacht General Staff, noted in his diary: "The Führer is calm... He believes that the French and the British will not enter the territory of Germany."¹ After Britain and France declared war, Hitler accurately predicted: "The fact that they have declared war... does not mean they will fight."²

The Polish military mission that arrived in London on September 3 was received by General Edmund William Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, only a week later. All that the British agreed to do was to supply rifles, and even then deliveries were to start in early 1940. The pattern was the same in Paris. The Polish ambassador to France Juliusz Lukasiewicz futilely sought an audience with Edouard Daladier. In London, too, Neville Chamberlain refused to receive the Polish ambas-

¹ Generaloberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch, Vol. I, Vom Polenfeldzug bis zum Ende der Westoffensive (14.8.1939 - 30.6.1940)*, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 48.

² Erich Kordt, *Wahn und Wirklichkeit*, Union deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1948, p. 218.

sador Edward Raczyński. With their illusions shattered, the Polish representatives saw with bitterness that "Poland may in the end have to fight alone".³ The Polish military attaché in Paris reported: "Up until 10.00 hours on September 7, 1939, there have been virtually no hostilities in the West. Neither the French nor the Germans are firing... Similarly, there have been no operations in the air... My estimate is that the French do not further their mobilisation and take no other actions, that they are awaiting the outcome of the fighting in Poland."⁴

Every new day confirmed that militarily the Anglo-French coalition was practically inactive, that it was leaving its Polish ally to the mercy of fate in the hope of a clash between the Soviet Union and Germany. Later, Charles de Gaulle was to write in his memoirs: "While almost all of the enemy's forces were engaged on the Vistula, we (the French Command.-P.S.), save for several demonstrations, did nothing to take us to the Rhine."⁵

The intentions of the Western powers were finally made clear at a meeting of the Supreme War Council of the Anglo-French coalition on September 12. Chamberlain explained that Britain was planning to prepare for war during the next three years. Gamelin confirmed that the French army would not mount a major offensive. As a result, it was decided to recommend "adherence to the existing policy of restriction".⁶ But not even such action was taken. The same day as the Supreme War Council met the French Command ordered the cessation of all military activity. This was approved by the political leadership of both Britain and France.⁷ Chamberlain declared that "Poland was lost in any case."⁸ On September 30, French troops were drawn back to the positions they had held at the outbreak of the war.

France and Britain had the military capacity to fulfil their al-

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, Vol. I*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1956, p. 413.

⁴ *Polskie siły zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej*, t. 1, Cz. 2, London, 1962, p. 436.

⁵ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, Vol. 1, *L'Appel, 1940-1942*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1954, p. 22.

⁶ J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. II, *September 1939-June 1941*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1957, p. 20.

⁷ Général Gamelin, *Servir*, Vol. III, *La guerre (septembre 1939-19 mai 1940)*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1947, p. 67.

⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939, Vol. I*, p. 425.

lied commitments to Poland. They had a three-fold supremacy over Germany in manpower, a more than three-fold supremacy in the air, and an overwhelming superiority in tanks.

Writing of the stand taken by Britain and France in the German-Polish war, Hugh Dalton, who was prominent in the British Labour Party, noted: "It was impossible to justify our treatment of the Poles. We were letting them down and letting them die, while we did nothing to help them."¹ Meanwhile, the German troops were developing their offensive deep into Poland. By the end of the first week of September the nation's defences had been largely disorganised. Poland's political and military leaders were rapidly losing their influence on the course of the hostilities. On September 6, the Polish government secretly left Warsaw, stayed for some time in Lublin, after which fled south to Kremenets, and then farther to Romania. It ended its flight in London. By mid-September it had become obvious that the Polish armed forces were broken: there was no longer organised nation-wide resistance to the German forces. "Poland's defeat," wrote Erich von Manstein, Army Group South Chief of Staff, "was an inevitable consequence of the illusions harboured in Warsaw about the actions of the Allies. The latter passively watched the destruction of their Polish Ally."²

The war with Nazi Germany clearly demonstrated the ineptness of the Polish High Command and the poor operational and tactical training of most of the headquarters staffs and senior officers. There were real conditions for drawing the entire Polish people into a war of liberation against the Nazi aggressors as early as September 1939, but they were not utilised by Poland's leaders on account of their class stand. The country's military defeat did not mean that the struggle of the Polish people against Nazism had ended—this struggle continued underground and in foreign countries.

PROBLEM OF THE USSR'S SECURITY

The developments in Poland, which had been betrayed by its own government and Allies, were followed with anxiety in the

¹ Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years. Memoirs 1931-1945*, Frederick Müller Ltd., London, 1957, p. 277.

² Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, Athenäum-Verlag, Bonn, 1955, p. 34.

Soviet Union. On September 2, 1939, the Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck informed the Polish embassy in London that the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw N. I. Sharonov had, on his own initiative, asked him why the Polish government was not negotiating with the USSR regarding the supplies needed by Poland.¹ While it knew of the Polish leaders' hostility for the USSR, the Soviet government gave its close attention to questions raised by the Polish side. On September 5, 1939 the Polish ambassador Wacław Grzybowski was received by the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The ambassador raised the question of trade between the USSR and Poland, of military supplies for Poland, and the transit of such supplies from other countries to Poland via the USSR. Referring to the trade agreement signed by the USSR and Poland in 1939, V. M. Molotov said that the Soviet Union intended to carry it out in full.²

The developments in the West increasingly prompted the Soviet government to fundamental decisions to strengthen the country's security. The press organs of the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government directly pointed to the actual state of affairs. "The Polish-German war," *Pravda* wrote, "has revealed the internal bankruptcy of the Polish state. Within the span of ten days of hostilities Poland has lost all its industrial regions and cultural centres."³ The newspaper *Izvestia* observed: "The Soviet government had to draw its conclusions from the obtaining situation... The Soviet government felt it was its sacred duty to extend its helping hand to brother-Ukrainians and brother-Byelorussians inhabiting Poland."⁴ The moment for resolute actions was determined with account of the situation in the Far East, where on September 15, 1939, the Soviet Union, Japan and the Mongolian People's Republic signed a document ending the hostilities started by the Japanese military on the Khalkhin-Gol. With this acute conflict situation defused, the way was opened for energetic steps to ensure the USSR's security in the west.

On September 17, 1939 Soviet troops crossed the frontier to

¹ *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations. 1939-1945*, Vol. I, Heinemann, London, 1961, p. 42.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Pravda*, September 19, 1939.

⁴ *Izvestia*, September 30, 1939.

liberate the population of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, which had been seized from Soviet Russia in 1920. Simultaneously, the Red Army liberated the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius and Vilnius Region that had likewise been seized by the Polish military in 1920. A Soviet government note of September 17, 1939, handed to the Polish ambassador stated: "Moreover, the Soviet government cannot be indifferent to the fact that the kindred Ukrainians and Byelorussians inhabiting Poland, thrown to the mercy of fate, have been left defenceless."¹ Faced with this situation the Soviet government had ordered the Red Army to cross the frontier and take the lives and property of the population of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia under its protection. An analogous statement was broadcast over the radio by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR V. M. Molotov. The text of the Soviet government's note to the Polish ambassador in Moscow was handed to the ambassadors of all the countries having diplomatic relations with the USSR.

The Soviet government combined its resolute actions with circumspection and caution, with close attention to all possible situations. The following gives a good indication of this. On September 19, 1939, when the Romanian ambassador to the USSR Nicolae Dianu called on the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR on instructions from his own government, the People's Commissar asked him: "Are there any surprises in store for the Soviet Union from the fact that the Polish government, the senior Polish military leaders, and 500 Polish aircraft are in Romania?" Dianu gave assurances that there would be no incidents.²

As they awaited the Red Army the working people of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia set up local government bodies (revolutionary committees), detachments of workers' guard in towns, and of peasant militia in rural communities. The working people guarded public property and expelled landowners, members of the bourgeoisie and of the police. The

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, p. 448 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

struggle for reunification with the USSR was headed by the Communists. Marshal of the Soviet Union V. I. Chuikov, who participated in the Red Army's action in the West in September 1939, recalls: "The army was ordered to move into Western Byelorussia and the Western Ukraine to save our kindred Byelorussians and Ukrainians from nazi occupation. I was in command of the 4th Army, which was to advance as far as Brest.

"This action had nothing in common with military operations. The population of Western Byelorussia and the Western Ukraine welcomed us with joy. Tanks and motor vehicles were virtually showered with flowers. Orthodox and Catholic priests came out to meet us with icons and gonfalons. Where the Red Army stepped, the road to nazism was closed. We stopped near the present frontier with the Polish People's Republic, on the eastern bank of the Bug. Although a non-aggression pact had been signed with Germany, our troops were on full combat alert. Nobody believed Hitler would abide by any treaty if he found it suited him to ignore it."¹

With massive aid from the population the Red Army completed its liberative mission at the close of September, halting at the so-called Curzon Line, which had been insisted upon by Britain as the eastern frontier of Poland back in 1920. More than 12 million people (including over six million Ukrainians and nearly three million Byelorussians) inhabiting a territory of 190,000 square kilometres were saved from nazi bondage. The conditions for building a new life were created in the liberated lands.

The Red Army's entry into the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia caused an eruption of anti-Sovietism among reactionary political quarters in Britain, France, and the USA. In a message sent to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on October 18, 1939, the Soviet ambassador in Paris wrote that an influential segment of the French ruling quarters was using inventions about a "Soviet attack on Poland" to urge the French government to draw "the logical conclusion" from this and "declare war on the USSR".²

Also blatantly absurd were the assertions that the USSR had

¹ V. I. Chuikov, "Mission in China", *Novy mir*, No. 11, 1979, pp. 198-99.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

"annexed" the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia. The reunification of the Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR and of Western Byelorussia with the Byelorussian SSR had nothing in common with annexation: at a time when the young Soviet state was weak militarily they had been forcibly wrested from it against the will of the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian population.

Asked whether in the situation that had taken shape by September 17 the Soviet Union could allow the Nazi army to occupy the whole of Poland, the French ambassador in Warsaw Léon Noël said: "That was not possible. The Soviet Union had to bring in its army before it was too late."¹ David Lloyd George, a prominent British political figure, wrote to the Polish ambassador in London on September 27, 1939, that the Soviet Army had occupied territories which were not Polish and which had been forcibly taken by Poland after the First World War. The inhabitants of the Polish Ukraine belonged to the same race and spoke the same language as their neighbours in the Soviet Ukrainian Republic. He wrote that it was of paramount importance to pay attention to these significant considerations without delay out of the apprehension that Britain might start a war against Russia in the mistaken belief that the character of its intervention was similar to that resorted to by Germany. . . It would be an act of criminal madness, he added, to bracket the Russian move with that of the Germans.

In October-November 1939, British officials made a series of statements about the Soviet Union's measures to reinforce its security along its western frontiers. There was realism in these statements, although they were made with the obvious aim of deteriorating Soviet-German relations.

In a talk with the Soviet ambassador to Britain I. M. Maisky on October 17, 1939, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Richard Butler said that government circles in Britain felt that there could be no question of returning the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia to Poland.² On October 20, 1939, political developments were broached at a meeting that Maisky had with the Minister of Supply

¹ Léon Noël, *op.cit.*, p. 501.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Edward Leslie Burgin and the Director-General of the Ministry of Economic Warfare Frederick William Leith-Ross. Both, the ambassador wrote, were derisive of the "sentimental simpletons" who were prattling about restoring Poland in its former frontiers. Both expressed their satisfaction at the fact that the USSR had occupied the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia ("A good thing Hitler did not get them") and said that only madmen could think of returning them to a "future Poland".¹

Regarding the postwar world Horace Wilson, Max Neville Chamberlain's chief adviser, said to Maisky on October 27 that Poland must be restored as an independent nation, but without the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia.² On October 28, 1939, Maisky drew the attention of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to a speech made by the British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax in the House of Lords on October 26, in which Halifax in fact (albeit in somewhat vague terms) said that Britain had no objections to the Soviet occupation of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia; Maisky also mentioned Chamberlain's reply in Parliament on that same day, October 26, to a question by the Liberal MP Geoffrey Le Mesurier Mander, in which the Prime Minister said that the British government shared the view relative to the USSR expressed by Churchill in a broadcast statement of October 1.³ Lastly, on November 24, 1939, Maisky reported to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that in a talk with a Labour MP the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Richard Butler had said that, unlike Daladier, the British government considered that there could be no question of returning the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia to Poland.⁴

Elections to the people's assemblies of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia were held in October 1939. These supreme legislative bodies proclaimed Soviet power and requested the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to admit these territories to the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*; *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons, Official Report*, Vol. 352, Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1939, col. 1570-71.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Soviet Union. This request was granted in November 1939 by the fifth extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Western Ukraine was reunited with the Ukrainian SSR, and Western Byelorussia with the Byelorussian SSR.

2. THE USSR AND FINLAND

On what were the relations between the Soviet Union and Finland based at the time the Second World War broke out? In December 1917, Soviet Russia recognised Finland's independence. The 1920 peace treaty became the legal foundation of Soviet-Finnish relations. In 1932 the USSR and Finland signed a treaty on non-aggression and peaceful settlement of conflicts. There was thus a sound prerequisite for the development of friendly relations between the two neighbouring countries. But this prerequisite was not used.

"ADVANCED POST" OF THE WEST

Jointly with the leading imperialist powers, the ruling quarters in Finland made great efforts to turn Finland into a springboard for an attack on the USSR. Powerful military installations were built under the direction of Western military experts at a distance of 32 kilometres from Leningrad, the cradle of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The fortifications, called the Mannerheim Line, running across the Karelian isthmus were nearing completion in 1938. These fortifications were seen as a guarantee of the impunity of troops poised for aggressive action against the Soviet Union. Many more aerodromes than was needed by the Finnish air force were being built near the Soviet frontier with the assistance of German experts. In fact, they could accommodate almost 10 times as many aircraft as were then available to the Finnish air force.¹ "At the close of the 1930s," Urho Kaleva Kekkonen said, "the shadow of Hitler spread over us,

¹ *War and Peace in Finland. A Documented Survey*, Soviet Russia Today, New York, 1940, p. 11; W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *The Soviet-Finnish Campaign. Military and Political, 1939-1940*, Eldon Press Ltd., London, 1941, p. 20.

and Finnish society as a whole cannot deny that it looked upon this rather favourably."¹ Small wonder that Nazi diplomacy saw Finland as a "friend and support". The German envoy in Helsinki Wipert von Blücher reported as early as 1935 that in the eyes of Finland the Soviet Union continued to be the only possible enemy and that therefore it had to be treated with the maximum distrust.²

It was the Soviet government's view that by 1939 Finland, chiefly the Karelian isthmus, had become a military springboard for potential aggression against the USSR. The Soviet government did not exaggerate Finland's military potential, although the bellicose anti-Sovietism of the Finnish militarists gave sufficient grounds for anxiety. But the main thing was in something else. The Soviet government was concerned chiefly about the possibility that Finnish militarism might be used by the imperialist powers for anti-Soviet purposes. "We do not fear Finland ... but some great power may use Finland against the Soviet Union," J. V. Stalin said to Finnish representatives in October 1939. Pointing to the region of Hanko on a map, he continued: "This is where the troops of a great power will land in Finland, and however much you resisted, you will not be able to prevent this; they will land and from there move in the direction of the Soviet Union across your country."³

The Soviet government made repeated attempts to reach understanding with Finland on reinforcing the Soviet Union's security in the northwest and improving relations with Finland. But there was no reciprocity on the part of Finland. Positive and ineffectual declarations on this score by Finnish representatives were clearly not enough.

In April 1938, acting through its embassy in Helsinki, the Soviet government proposed discussing with the Finnish side measures to strengthen the security of both countries in view of the growing threat of war in Europe. In the opinion of the

¹ Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, *Friendship and Goodneighbourly Relations. Speeches and Statements, 1963-1967*, Moscow, 1968, p. 38 (Russian translation).

² Quoted from T. Bartenyev, Y. Komissarov, *Thirty Years of Goodneighbourly Relations. On the History of Soviet-Finnish Relations*, Moscow, 1976, p. 28 (in Russian).

³ *The Paasikivi Line. Articles and Speeches by Juho Kusti Paasikivi, 1944-1956*, Moscow, 1958, p. 55 (Russian translation).

USSR, this could be effectively served by a Soviet-Finnish treaty on mutual assistance. In Helsinki they declined discussing the Soviet proposals. Nevertheless, the USSR continued its efforts and in March 1939 offered to guarantee the inviolability of Finland and its sea frontiers in the event of aggression against it. The Soviet Union requested Finland to commit itself to resist any aggression and help the USSR in making Leningrad more secure against attack from land and sea. In this context it was suggested that Finland lease the USSR four islands in the Gulf of Finland that could, in the hands of an aggressor, be a serious danger to Leningrad. When Finland rejected the idea of leasing the islands, the Soviet government suggested something else—an exchange of territory—declaring that it was prepared to give its northern neighbour a part of Soviet Karelia. The Soviet-Finnish talks on the question of an exchange of territories, conducted in Finland in March-April 1939, came to nothing.

With the threat of war nearer than ever after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Soviet government could not postpone settling the difficult situation on its northwestern frontier. "It is not hard to understand that in the present international situation, when a war is going on in the centre of Europe between leading states, a war fraught with great surprise and danger to all European nations, the Soviet Union has not only the right but is also obliged to take serious measures to strengthen its security," stated the Soviet government report at the extraordinary fifth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on October 31, 1939. "In this context, it is natural that the Soviet government should show special concern over the Gulf of Finland, which is the sea approach to Leningrad, and also over the land frontier, which is only some 30 kilometres away from Leningrad."¹

The British journalist Alexander Werth, who worked in Moscow practically all through the Second World War, wrote that to him it was quite obvious that because of the possibility (and even probability) of an attack from that direction it was vital

¹ *Extraordinary Fifth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, October 31-November 2, 1939. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1939, pp. 17-18 (in Russian).

for the Soviet Union to correct the frontier running north and northwest of Leningrad.¹

The facts are that the USSR tried to defuse the tension in its relations with Finland and resolve the problem of ensuring the security of its frontiers above all by peaceful means, to use all the opportunities offered by negotiations and prevent an armed conflict with Finland. The Soviets did not desire the Finnish war, noted the American military historian and diplomat Raymond L. Garthoff.² Soviet diplomacy sought an agreement with Finland in the context of the USSR's actions to strengthen security in the Baltic region, where a treaty of mutual assistance was signed with Estonia towards the end of September 1939, preparations were under way for signing a treaty with Latvia, and analogous questions were being discussed with Lithuania.

THE MOSCOW TALKS

During the Soviet-Finnish talks, started on October 11, 1939, there were three meetings with Soviet leaders—J. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov. At the first meeting the Finns were represented by Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was then the Finnish envoy in Sweden, while the second and the third were also attended by the Finnish Finance Minister Väinö Tanner. The Soviet government took a constructive approach and displayed goodwill. After setting out the Soviet proposals for settling the frontier problems, Stalin said that from the purely military standpoint these were minimal. Paasikivi subsequently acknowledged that the Soviet arguments were cogent and that the proposals for altering the frontier were restrained and moderate.³

But the talks began in a tense atmosphere. There was no unity among the Finnish representatives. Reflecting the alignment of forces in Helsinki, the hardliners on the delegation sought to play the dominant role. "If on the Finnish side the talks had

¹ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-45*, Barrie and Rockliffe, London, 1964.

² Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Military Policy*, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1966, p. 14.

³ Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, *Finland: Road to Peace and Goodneighbourly Relations. Articles, Speeches, Letters, 1943-1978*, Moscow, 1979, p. 190 (Russian translation).

been conducted by Mr. Paasikivi, without the participation of Mr. Tanner, as was the case in the initial period, the talks would probably have produced an acceptable agreement. But Mr. Tanner's participation in the talks spoiled everything and, apparently, tied Mr. Paasikivi's hands,"¹ V. M. Molotov said to the US ambassador in Moscow Laurence Steinhardt on December 2, 1939.

What was the subject of the talks? The Soviet Union started them by proposing a Soviet-Finnish mutual assistance pact along the lines of the pacts of mutual assistance signed by the USSR with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. But when the Finnish representatives declared that a pact of this kind would run counter to Finland's position of "absolute neutrality", the Soviet side did not insist. It proposed going over to the issues in which the USSR was especially interested in the context of ensuring its security, notably the security of Leningrad from the direction of the Gulf of Finland and also from land because of the city's proximity to the frontier. It was proposed that an understanding be reached on moving the Soviet-Finnish frontier on the Karelian isthmus several dozen kilometres to the north of Leningrad.

In exchange, Finland would get part of Soviet Karelia twice the size of the territory to be turned over by Finland. Further, the offer was made to reach agreement with Finland on the lease to the Soviet Union for a stated length of time of a small parcel of land in the vicinity of Hanko Island, at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, so that the USSR could build a naval base there. With a Soviet naval base also at the southern entrance to the Gulf of Finland, as stipulated in the Soviet-Estonian mutual assistance pact, the building of the second base at the northern entrance of the gulf would strengthen the security of the Gulf of Finland against possible aggression by third countries, notably by Germany.

The Soviet side took some new steps meeting Finland's interests, in particular, relative to the Åland Islands. Further, the Soviet representatives raised the question of reinforcing the Soviet-Finnish non-aggression pact with additional mutual guarantees. Lastly, in the Soviet proposals the consolidation of Soviet-Fin-

nish relations was seen as a prerequisite for the expansion of economic relations between the two countries.

Reinhold Svento, who was to become Foreign Minister in the postwar Paasikivi government, later wrote: "We could accept the Soviet Union's proposal for an exchange of territories."¹ This was the view of that section of opinion in Finland that wanted goodneighbourly relations with the Soviet Union and was opposed to their country being drawn into the dangerous foreign policy and military adventures of the imperialist powers. Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was to become his country's Prime Minister and then President, called the Soviet proposals "restrained and moderate". In his reminiscences he noted: "For my part I felt, during and after the talks, that the best alternative for us would be to reach agreement."²

But spurred on by the imperialist Western powers, the Finnish government rejected the Soviet proposals. The talks were broken off on November 7, 1939. In Helsinki they believed that relative to the eastern neighbour a "hard line" would be best.³ Paasikivi qualified the breaking off of the talks as "one of gravest and serious mistakes in a series of Finland's foreign policy miscalculations"⁴ at the time.

FINLAND IS PUSHED INTO CONFRONTATION WITH THE USSR

Why had Helsinki adopted a negative stand towards the Soviet proposals? They had been, after all, assessed as realistic by many Finnish personalities while the autumn talks were still in progress and, much more so, in retrospective. "It may be said with confidence," the Soviet government's report at the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR noted, "that if there had been no external influences relative to Finland and if relative to Finland there had been less instigation on the part of

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 471.

¹ Reinhold Svento, *Neuvostoliitto maailmanpolitiikan Keskipisteessä*, Suomi-Neuvostoliitto-seura, Helsinki, 1959, pp. 67-69.

² Juho Kusti Paasikivi, *Meine Moskauer Mission, 1939-41*, Holsten-Verlag, Hamburg, 1966, p. 113.

³ Reinhold Svento, *Ystäväni Juho Kusti Paasikivi*, Söderström Porvoo-Helsinki, 1960, pp. 67-69.

⁴ *A History of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, p. 28 (in Russian).

some third states to get Finland to pursue a policy hostile towards the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union and Finland would have reached a peaceful settlement last autumn... Although the Soviet government reduced its wishes to a minimum, no settlement was made by diplomatic means."¹

Mannerheim admits that among Finland's rulers the anti-Soviet line of the Western powers created the confidence that "in the event of a conflict with the USSR we would not be in isolation".² Representatives of the German Foreign Office convinced Pastor Kaarlo Riitekki Kares, leader of the Finnish Lappo-Fascists, "that they could gain everything by war". A German diplomat gave the assurance that if there was a setback Finland would subsequently be compensated by means of war.³ US Secretary of State Cordell Hull "thanked Finland for her firm stand in the Moscow negotiations".⁴ Harold L. Ickes wrote in his secret diary that "Finland is being used by the aristocratic and monied interests of England and France to do what harm it can to Russia, even if in the end it must fall before the superior forces and resources of Russia."⁵

Thus, the imperialist powers of the two groups were in fact competing with each other to bring anti-Soviet pressure to bear on Finland's leaders. On October 9, 1939, the US mission in Finland telegraphed Secretary of State Hull to inform him that the "instructions given to the Finnish delegation... were quite as stiff as the American and British Ministers to Finland had anticipated".⁶ The German mission in Helsinki had earlier pressed the Finnish Foreign Ministry to prevent an agreement with the Soviet Union.⁷

¹ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 29 (in Russian).

² *Les mémoires du Maréchal Mannerheim*, Hachette, Paris, 1952, p. 275.

³ Major Erwin Lessner, *Blitzkrieg and Bluff*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1943, p. 148.

⁴ *Finland and World War II. 1939-1944*, edited by John H. Wuorinen, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1948, p. 62.

⁵ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. III, *The Lowering Clouds. 1939-1941*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1954, p. 134.

⁶ William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation. 1937-1940*, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York, 1952, p. 322.

⁷ *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D (1937-1945)*, Vol. V, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1953, pp. 628-29.

The US President found it appropriate to intervene in Soviet-Finnish relations. In a message of October 12 to the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Franklin D. Roosevelt in effect endorsed the claims of the Finnish militarists.

On November 30, 1939, the US charge d'affaires ad interim in the USSR handed V. P. Potemkin, the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, a US government statement offering to act as "mediator" between the USSR and Finland. Potemkin replied that the Soviet government had hitherto conducted its negotiations without mediators. Were the talks between the USSR and Finland to be resumed, he said, they too would proceed without mediators.¹

British diplomacy stepped into the leading role in encouraging the anti-Sovietism of Finland's ruling circles. Criticising the British government for its policy towards the USSR, a leading Labour Party personality Sir Stafford Cripps, who was to become the British ambassador to the USSR, told the Soviet ambassador on November 12, 1939, that some elements in the British government were confusing provincial Finnish heads and preventing them from settling their relations with the USSR as good neighbours.² Britain pressured the USSR with the threat that relations with it would be frozen for a long time. As the Soviet ambassador in London reported on November 13, 1939, this was exactly how Winston Churchill put the matter in talks with Soviet representatives.³

Reactionary ruling quarters in Finland thus took the country onto a dangerous road. "We have led Finland on,"⁴ summed up Emanuel Celler, an American political figure, addressing the US Congress on February 4, 1940. Finland would not have ventured to enter into a military conflict with the Soviet Union singlehanded. All its military plans, noted the Finnish Defence Minister Juho Niukkanen, were based on the premise that "Finland would never fight any big power singlehanded".⁵

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 86, Pt. 13, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1940, p. 523.

⁵ Juho Niukkanen, *Talvisodan puolustusministeri kertoo*, Porvoo Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, Helsinki, 1951, p. 31.

Military preparations were stepped up in Finland at a time when the Soviet-Finnish talks had only started. The Finnish army was ordered to be on combat alert. Troops were quickly deployed along the frontier. The population began to be evacuated from Helsinki and some other towns, and also from the Karelian isthmus area. Many people who took a sympathetic attitude towards the Soviet Union were arrested.

In Finland militarist anti-Soviet propaganda reached its highest pitch at the moment the talks were broken off. The press tried to make people believe that Finland could fight the USSR and win. In a book published at the time under the title *The Defence of Finland*, an officer of the Finnish General Staff named Wolfgang Halsti argued that Finland had only one enemy, the USSR.¹ Towards the close of October 1939, C. O. Frietsch, a member of the foreign policy commission of the Finnish parliament, made tour of the troops deployed on the Karelian isthmus near the Soviet frontier and returned with the conclusion that "Finland is ready for war".²

On November 12, 1939, in order to explain the Soviet stand, TASS published a statement refuting the foreign press assertions that the Soviet government had allegedly declined the "latest concessions made by Finland". The Finns made no concessions. "According to information available to TASS, far from meeting the minimal Soviet proposals halfway, the Finns are hardening their posture. Until recently, on the Karelian isthmus the Finns had two or three divisions deployed against Leningrad; they have now increased the number of divisions threatening Leningrad to seven, and are thereby demonstrating their intractability."³

On November 13-14, in an atmosphere of war hysteria, the mobilisation of reservists was announced in Finland and universal labour conscription was introduced. An army group consisting of some 15 infantry divisions was massed along the frontier with the USSR. The Finnish army had a trained reserve of between 300,000 and 400,000 men.⁴

¹ C. O. Frietsch, *Suomen Koptalomnuodet*, Tammi, Helsinki, 1945, p. 42.

² Ibid., p. 111.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 461.

⁴ T. Bartenyev, Y. Komissarov, *Thirty Years of Goodneighbourly Relations*, p. 40.

On November 26, 1939, near the village of Mainila, Finnish troops opened fire on Soviet frontier guards. Exercising restraint, the Soviet government declared on that same day that it "has no intention of fanning this outrageous act of aggression on the part of units of the Finnish army".¹ It said that it hoped there would be no further acts of this kind.² The USSR then suggested that the Finnish government immediately pull back its troops 20-25 kilometres from the frontier on the Karelian isthmus in order to avoid any repetition of provocations. Finland replied by demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the same distance, in other words, their virtual withdrawal to the suburbs of Leningrad. Provocations by the Finns continued. All the indications were that the reactionary Finnish leadership had cut off all further political means for ending the tension in Soviet-Finnish relations.

On November 28, 1939, the Soviet government was forced to inform the government of Finland that it had denounced the 1932 non-aggression treaty and ordered the recall of its diplomatic and trade representatives. It declared that "it considers itself to be free from the commitments assumed under the non-aggression pact concluded between the USSR and Finland and systematically violated by the government of Finland".³ On the next day the Soviet armed forces were ordered "immediately to cut short possible new provocations by the Finnish military".⁴ The Finnish envoy in Moscow was informed of this by V. P. Potemkin, First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR. But the armed provocations did not cease. Hostilities broke out between Finland and the USSR on November 30, 1939.

CONFLICT AND QUEST FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT

When it became obvious that a military conflict was breaking out on the Soviet Union's northwestern frontier, Britain, France, and the USA intensified their intervention in the developments,

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 463.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 465.

⁴ Ibid., p. 467.

extending considerable military assistance to Finland. Their calculations were based on the self-same Munich political line of changing the direction of the Second World War by rechanneling the efforts of all the imperialist powers, including Nazi Germany, into an armed struggle against the Soviet Union. In December 1939, the newspaper *New York Post* wrote openly that the Soviet-Finnish war could lead to a united front against the Soviet Union. The assistance given to the Finnish militarists was substantial indeed. As many as 500 aircraft were sent to Finland from Britain, France, and Sweden. Over 11,000 volunteers arrived in Finland from the Scandinavian nations, the USA, and other countries.¹ Italy and Germany also helped Finland.

In the British government, the Soviet ambassador in London reported on January 25, 1940, there was a growing tendency for escalating the Soviet-Finnish conflict through intervention by Britain.² Reactionary political quarters were urging the British government to act even at the risk of breaking off relations and engaging in an armed conflict with the USSR.

Britain, France, and the USA increasingly coordinated their efforts in the Finnish issue.

As early as October 1939, the USA had supplied Finland with 850,000 dollars' worth of aircraft and other military hardware. In December 1939, with the approval of the President, the Export-Import Bank of the USA had extended a credit of 10 million dollars to Finland.³ Many American pilots and airfield service personnel had been sent to Finland. The White House declared that service in the Finnish army by American citizens would not mean violation of the Neutrality Bill. The US government got Congress to approve giving Finland another 20 million dollars. This money was in fact imposed upon Finland: according to the information available to the Soviet embassy in Washington, the Finns had by February 1, 1940, used not more than 3 million dollars out of the first credit of 10 million dollars.⁴ Headed by the rabidly anti-Soviet former US Pres-

¹ C. Leonard Lundin, *Finland in the Second World War*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1957, p. 59.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

ident Herbert Hoover, reactionary circles in the USA launched a fund-raising campaign for Finland. This campaign brought 1,200,000 dollars.¹

In other words, in the northwest of the USSR a military collision was taking place not only with the Finnish militarists but also with the forces of the imperialists of a number of countries who were helping Finland with money, weapons (especially artillery and aircraft), manpower in the guise of "volunteers", aggressive diplomacy, and the whipping up of anti-Soviet propaganda.

Counting on involving other countries in the military conflict with the USSR, the Finnish government attempted to secure the mediation of Germany and the USA. But these countries were interested in the continuation of hostilities. Germany rejected the offer, while the US government said that it felt the moment was "inopportune" for concluding peace.² It was only then that the Finnish government approached the USSR through the government of Sweden. On behalf of the Finnish government, the Swedish envoy in Moscow Otto Winter formally informed V. M. Molotov on December 4, 1939, that the "Finnish government wishes to ask the Soviet government if it is prepared to enter into new negotiations".³

The Soviet government responded affirmatively to the very first peace sounding of the Finns.

On January 29, 1940, the Swedish Foreign Minister Christian E. Günther was informed that in principle the Soviet government had no objection to signing a peace treaty with the Ryti-Tanner government, but before beginning peace negotiations it wished to know the terms that Finland was prepared to accept.⁴

When the Finns insisted on knowing the Soviet terms in advance, the Soviet government obliged, forwarding its terms to the Finnish government on February 23, 1940, through the Soviet ambassador to Sweden A. M. Kollontai. These were the transfer to the USSR of the Karelian isthmus and the northeast-

¹ *Ibid.*

² W. Langer and E. Gleason, op. cit., p. 397.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

⁴ *A History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*. Vol. 1, Moscow, 1960, p. 271 (in Russian).

ern shore of Lake Ladoga, and a lease of the Hanko peninsula with the adjoining small islands for a Soviet naval base to guard the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. The Soviet government said it was prepared to let Finland have the Petsamo district and that it would be willing to sign a treaty with Finland and Estonia on the joint defence of the Gulf of Finland.

Further, in order to blunt Britain's anti-Soviet activities, the Soviet government offered London the role of mediator in organising Soviet-Finnish peace negotiations. On February 24, 1940, the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Richard Butler handed Britain's negative reply to the Soviet ambassador, thereby confirming that London was actually in solidarity with the anti-Soviet line of Finland's ruling quarters.

On February 26, the Finnish government declared that the Soviet terms were unacceptable. This declaration contradicted common sense. In six days, on March 4, 1940, the Finnish commander-in-chief Carl Mannerheim reported to the government that in the Karelian isthmus the Finnish troops were in a critical position. After heavy fighting Soviet troops had breached the powerful fortifications of the Mannerheim Line, which Western military experts considered to be impregnable. The road to Finland's capital was now open. But it was not the Soviet Union's intention to occupy Finland, although it had the military potential for doing just this. The USSR's restraint, its readiness to settle the conflict by peaceful means refuted all the inventions about its desire to "bolshevise" Finland, inventions spread energetically by Finnish and international reaction before and throughout the war.

By March 1, the Red Army's advance had finally made the Finnish government decide to begin peace talks. Through A. M. Kollontai Moscow was informed that the Finnish government felt it could "consider the Soviet terms as the starting-point for talks and that it accepted them in principle".¹

Väinö Tanner writes: "No sooner had the Cabinet reached its decision than it began to be pressed urgently from without. France and England ... attempted by all means at their disposal to prevent Finland from engaging in peace negotiations with

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

the Soviet Union."¹ In London the Finns were told in ultimatum language that "in the event that discussions with the Soviet Union should be continued, all preparations (for sending an expeditionary force.—P.S.) would be interrupted and shipments of arms and economic support would cease".²

Giving in to this pressure from Britain and France, the Finnish government once again procrastinated, postponing the sending of a peace delegation to Moscow. Although on March 1 it had decided to begin peace negotiations, that same day it sent the Soviet government a statement requesting additional clarification and information.³ It was still hoping for assistance from the imperialist powers and ignoring the actual state of affairs in the war theatre. But the combined pressure brought to bear on Finland by Britain, France, and the USA could no longer wreck the Soviet-Finnish talks. Military defeat made Finland see the necessity for a political settlement of the military conflict.

THE CONFLICT IS SETTLED

The USSR and Finland signed a peace treaty in Moscow on March 12, 1940. Under the treaty, the Soviet-Finnish state frontier was somewhat altered. Primordial Russian lands passed to the USSR—the Karelian isthmus with the town of Vyborg, the northern and western shores of Lake Ladoga, the area west of the Murmansk Railway, and a section of the Rybachy and Sredny peninsulas on the coast of the Barents Sea. The Soviet Union obtained a 30-year lease for the Hanko peninsula as the site of a naval base.

Article III, one of the most important provisions of the peace treaty, states: "Both Contracting Parties mutually undertake to refrain from any attack upon each other, not to conclude any alliances, and not to participate in any coalitions directed against one of the Contracting Parties."⁴ While the first part of this article was not a new principle of Soviet-Finnish relations

¹ Väinö Tanner, *The Winter War. Finland against Russia 1939-1940*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1957, p. 195.

² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴ *War and Peace in Finland*, p. 126.

and had been recorded earlier in the 1932 non-aggression treaty (this provision was included in the 1940 treaty at the request of the Finnish side), the latter part on non-participation in alliances and coalitions hostile towards the USSR was a fundamentally new commitment undertaken by the government of Finland. The Soviet Union attached special significance to this as a political guarantee of the future course of Finland's foreign policy.

On October 11, 1940, the USSR and Finland signed an agreement on the Åland Islands. Finland undertook to demilitarise these islands, in other words, to refrain from fortifying them or from letting them be used as a base by the armed forces of other countries. The Soviet Union got the right to maintain a consulate on Åland Islands, which, in addition to the usual consular functions, was to monitor Finland's compliance with its commitments on the demilitarisation of the islands.¹

With the armed conflict with Finland settled, the USSR ensured the security of its northwestern frontiers, above all the security of Leningrad, to the extent it was possible under the prevailing circumstances. There were now favourable prospects for expanding relations with Finland on a goodneighbourly basis, in a spirit of confidence.

The outcome of the war sobered the aggressors and their accomplices in the two imperialist groups. On March 8, 1940, Hitler wrote to Mussolini that the Soviet victory had to be taken into account in the plans of Germany and Italy for the future. "Taking into consideration the available supply facilities," he wrote, "no power in the world would have been able, except after the most thoroughgoing preparations, to achieve such results at 30 to 40 degrees below zero (C) on such terrain than did the Russians at the very first."² As, for example, Alfred Jodl, Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff of the OKW, noted in his diary on March 12, 1940, "the Finnish-Russian treaty deprives not only Britain but also us (Germany.-P.S.) of all political justification for the occupation of Norway".³

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, pp. 528-29.

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 877.

³ John Midgaard, 9 April 1940, Dagen OG Forspillet, Forlagt AV, H. Aschenhoug & Co., Oslo, 1960, p. 68.

As early as February 5, 1940, the Anglo-French Supreme War Council came to the conclusion that Finland's "capitulation to Russia would be a major defeat for the Allies, most damaging to their prestige throughout the world".¹ The peace treaty of March 12 was indeed a blow not only to the ambitions of the Finnish militarists. On March 14, 1940, the Soviet ambassador to France reported to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that the outcome of the Soviet-Finnish conflict was seen in France as "a major setback, as a result of the vacillation, weakness, and indecision of the Allies".² A report from the Soviet ambassador to Britain dated March 13, 1940, said: "To-day I listened to Chamberlain informing Parliament about the peace treaty signed by the USSR and Finland and got further evidence of how great the danger had been of Britain and France intervening on the side of Finland... More than ever before it became clear that peace was signed opportunely."³ At the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR V. M. Molotov noted that "in his address to the House of Commons... (Chamberlain) not only expressed bitter regret over the failure to prevent the termination of the war in Finland, thereby turning his 'peace-loving' imperialist soul inside out for all the world to see, but gave something in the nature of an account of how the British imperialists endeavoured to escalate the war in Finland against the Soviet Union".⁴

ON THE ROAD TO COMPLICITY IN CASE BARBAROSSA

The sobering effect of the outcome of the Soviet-Finnish armed conflict did not last long on the ruling quarters in Finland. In Helsinki the peace treaty of March 12, 1940, with the USSR was regarded as no more than an armistice to be used for settling accounts with the Soviet Union. The actions of the Ryti government within the country were self-evident: the persecution was started of people who had come out for goodneighbourly

¹ J.R.M. Butler, op. cit., p. 107.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940*, pp. 31-32.

relations with the USSR; the Society for Peace and Friendship with the USSR, which had been set up in May 1940, was subjected to harassment: towards the close of 1940 it was banned, while many of its members were imprisoned. Revanchist, anti-Soviet, pro-fascist organisations were encouraged.

As the military-political situation in Western Europe changed drastically in the spring and summer of 1940 there was a marked rise of pro-German trends among Finland's leaders. The government granted the right of transit to German troops sent to Norway, which the nazis had occupied. The time, place, and volume of this "transit" was determined by Germany entirely at its own discretion. German-Finnish military cooperation gained momentum: Finland received increasing supplies of German armaments and systematic links were established between the general staffs and the intelligence services of the two countries. This did not go unnoticed by the Soviet government. In their contacts with the Finnish side, Soviet representatives, proceeding from the terms of the peace treaty, tried to prevent Finland from being drawn into the preparations for war against the USSR, and expressed their concern over the "transit" of German troops across Finnish territory, the recruiting of Finnish "volunteers" into the nazi SS forces, and the talks between the Finnish and German general staffs.

It was becoming increasingly obvious that Finland was moving towards rapprochement with nazi Berlin. To quote Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, "the decision of the Finnish military command and the Ryti government to collaborate with nazi Germany may be regarded as the direct result of Finland's foreign policy aspirations during the first decades after independence".¹ By April 1940 the Soviet military leadership was regarding Finland as a probable participant in a nazi attack on the USSR.² "The Finnish government," write the Soviet historians T. Bartenyev and Y. Komissarov, "consistently and deliberately pursued a course that turned Finland into a participant in nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, into one of the executors of Case Barbarossa."³

¹ *Izvestia*, October 16, 1974.

² A. M. Vasilevsky, *A Lifelong Cause*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 74.

³ T. Bartenyev, Y. Komissarov, op cit., p. 44.

There is compelling evidence to show that Mannerheim was informed of this plan on the day after it had been approved by Hitler.¹ As early as the beginning of 1941 the German and Finnish military staffs started discussing the possibilities for military cooperation in the event of a Soviet-German war. On January 30, 1941, the Finnish Chief of Staff General E. Heinrichs told the German side that for an invasion of the USSR Finland would be able to deploy five divisions along the western and three divisions along the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga, and also two divisions against the Soviet military base at Hanko. Among the Finnish ruling quarters it was decided that there would be a war against the USSR and that Finland would be involved in that war on Germany's side.

The objectives of the Finnish and German forces that were being massed in Northern and Central Finland were defined in a directive of the German High Command of April 7, 1941, and announced in operational directives of the Finnish General Staff and the directive of April 20 of the Commander of the German "Norway" Army.² The plans for interaction between German and Finnish troops were finalised at the military talks on May 25-28, 1941, in Salzburg, and on June 15 a large part of the Finnish army was, by order of Mannerheim, placed under the command of the German commander in Norway General Falkenhorst.

A German army of more than 40,000 effectives was concentrated in Finland on the eve of the nazi invasion of the USSR. Finland committed aggression against the USSR together with nazi Germany.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BALTIC

The USSR steadfastly pursued a friendly policy towards Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. This bore out Lenin's words that "as far as concerns the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements of the small countries ... we are, maybe, not allies, but at any

¹ Ibid.

² *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, p. 239.

rate more reliable and more valuable neighbours than the imperialists".¹ But reactionary quarters, in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were following in the wake of the leading Western imperialist powers.

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE TREATIES—FACTOR OF PEACE AND SECURITY

The Polish bourgeois state's military-political defeat by Germany, the fact that nazi Germany was now poised on the USSR's western frontiers, and the anti-Soviet policies pursued by Britain and France during the period of the "phoney war" intensified the threat to the Soviet Union's security in the Baltic region. "The imperialists regarded the Baltic region as one of the most convenient springboards for an attack on the Soviet Union, for it provided the shortest route to the most vital centres of the world's first socialist state,"² writes the Soviet historian V. J. Sipols. As soon as any imperialist power began planning to strike at the Soviet Union it immediately turned its gaze in the direction of the Baltic.

The interests of the Soviet Union's security demanded measures to prevent the territory of the Baltic states from being used as a springboard for aggression against it. At the military talks in the summer of 1939 the Soviet government insistently raised the question with Britain and France of joint armed action against aggression in the Baltic region, action that, in the event of war with Germany, would include British and French naval squadrons entering the Baltic and engaging the German navy. Before the war broke out the USSR had proposed that Britain and France should reach agreement with the Baltic countries on the temporary stationing of British and French fleets at the Aland Islands, the Moonsund archipelago, and a number of Baltic ports "in order to protect the neutrality of these countries against Germany". For the same purpose the Soviet Baltic Fleet

would, if necessary, also be based there.¹ The Soviet proposals were rejected.

At the close of September 1939, in order to contain the spread of the nazi threat, the Soviet government offered the Estonian Foreign Minister Karl Selter to discuss the question of reinforcing security on the eastern coast of the Baltic, having in mind the conclusion of a treaty on mutual assistance. Estonia accepted this proposal, and the treaty was signed on September 28. An analogous proposal was made to the government of Latvia. The talks on a treaty took place in Moscow on October 2-5 and ended with the signing of a treaty. On October 10 a treaty of mutual assistance was signed with Lithuania.

At the talks with the Baltic states Soviet diplomacy strongly made the point that German aggression against these states was not ruled out. The treaties themselves, which were almost identical,² were worded correspondingly. Article I of the treaties with Latvia and Estonia (Article II of the treaty with Lithuania) stated that the contracting parties had undertaken to extend to each other every possible, including military, assistance in the event of a direct attack or threat of attack by any great European power regardless of whether this was an attack by land or sea. The Soviet Union would extend to the armies of each of these countries assistance in the form of armaments and other military supplies on favourable terms. Under Article III of the treaties with Latvia and Estonia (Article IV of the treaty with Lithuania), in order to strengthen the mutual security of the Soviet Union and the Baltic states, the latter granted the USSR the right to set up naval bases and airfields and to maintain, at its own expense, strictly limited ground and air forces in the sectors set aside for bases and airfields. A fundamentally important point was that the treaties contained commitments not to conclude alliances or to participate in coalitions directed against any of the contracting parties.

Under the treaty with Lithuania, the Soviet Union, with a view to strengthening friendly relations with that country, trans-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Eighth All-Russia Conference of the RCP(B)", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1965, p. 176.

² V. J. Sipols, *Secret Diplomacy. Bourgeois Latvia in the Anti-Soviet Plans of the Imperialist Powers. 1919-1940*, Riga, 1968, p. 5 (in Russian).

¹ *The USSR in the Struggle Against the Nazi Aggression 1933-1945*, Moscow, 1976, p. 126 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, pp. 451, 453-58.

ferred to Lithuania the city and region of Vilnius, which had been taken from Lithuania by Poland in 1920 and liberated by Soviet troops in September 1939. Moreover, the treaty stated that the Soviet Union would help to defend Lithuania's western frontier.

These treaties did not infringe on the sovereign rights of the Baltic states, nor did they affect their social and state system. They were based on the principles of equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and mutual respect for independence and sovereignty.

They were significant factors strengthening the Soviet Union's defence capability and security in the northwest. More, they cut short Nazi Germany's attempts to consolidate its positions in this key military-strategic region.

At the extraordinary fifth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, held on October 31-November 2, 1939, V. M. Molotov said: "We are for honest and scrupulous compliance with the concluded pacts on terms of complete reciprocity."¹ On the basis of the achieved improvement of political relations with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Soviet Union took steps to meet the economic requirements of these nations, including the signing of the corresponding trade agreements with them. "In a situation where the trade of all the European nations, including neutral states, is facing immense difficulties," the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was told, "these economic agreements of the USSR with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are of great positive significance to them."² The Supreme Soviet approved the policies of the Soviet government relative to the Baltic region.

The treaties of mutual assistance were a factor enervating the democratic forces in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They were welcomed by the working people of these countries. At rallies and meetings the working people demanded the curbing of the activity of fascist organisations and closer friendly relations with the Soviet Union. "The treaty has released the revolutionary dynamic forces of the people," wrote the Latvian

¹ *Extraordinary Fifth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. October 31-November 2, 1939*, pp. 15-16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

newspaper *Cīņa*, "that had been held in check for 20 years. These forces have started moving and there's nothing that can stop them anymore."¹

THE SITUATION IN THE BALTIC REGION CHANGES RADICALLY

Subsequent developments made it plain that the governments of the Baltic states had no intention of reciprocating the actions of the Soviet Union which punctiliously honoured all its commitments under the treaties. Anti-Soviet feeling, already high in the leadership of these states, mounted as the Baltic bourgeoisie let itself be carried away by its long-standing hostility for socialism and its fear of any further revolutionisation of the masses. The powers of the two imperialist groups, especially Germany, prodded the Baltic capitals harder in an anti-Soviet direction. There was nothing in the actions of the governments of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to show that they sincerely wanted co-operation with the Soviet Union.

Hostility for the USSR mounted in the policies of the Baltic ruling quarters when war broke out between the Soviet Union and Finland. In violation of its treaty with the USSR, Latvia secretly gave Finland military assistance. "Volunteers" were recruited for Finland with the connivance of the authorities in all three Baltic countries, especially in Estonia. It is estimated that between two and three thousand Estonians took part in the fighting on the side of the Finnish armed forces.² The leadership in the Baltic states began to lean more and more towards Nazi Germany. Many friends of the Soviet Union, active fighters against fascism were arrested in January 1940 in Riga, Liepāja, Jelgava, and Ventspils. There was intensified harassment of people urging friendly relations with the USSR in Estonia and Lithuania. The Soviet government drew the attention of all these countries to their violations of the treaties with the USSR and warned them of the consequences of these violations. These warnings were ignored.

Talks were dragged out on the schedule of bringing limited

¹ V. J. Sipols, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 325-26.

contingents of Soviet troops into the territory of the Baltic countries, the quartering of these troops was sabotaged, and measures were taken to cut off all contact between the civilian population and Soviet soldiers. Army units were stationed around the Soviet garrisons in order to isolate them. Soviet military personnel was placed under heavy surveillance. Nobody was allowed in the trains used by Red Armymen. On October 19, 1939, the Soviet ambassador to Lithuania reported that people were being manhandled and arrested for the "least criticism of the government or for showing any gratitude to the USSR".¹

The Soviet government's concern about the situation along the USSR's frontiers in the Baltic region was intensified by the circumstance that the line towards subverting the treaties with the Soviet Union was accompanied by a marked growth of military preparations in these states and by the arming of fascist-type nationalistic organisations. The military leadership in the Baltic states began planning an attack on the Soviet garrisons in the event of a military situation.

The political and military leadership of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania began to meet more and more often in order to consolidate the anti-Soviet forces in the Baltic region and expand military cooperation. These meetings forged an anti-Soviet military alliance between Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. The commander-in-chief of the Lithuanian army subsequently confirmed that in 1940 the general staffs of the Baltic states had worked out plans for possible joint military operations. This activity was in violation of the mutual assistance treaties signed by the USSR with the Baltic states, which contained the provision that the signatory states would not conclude any alliances and would not join any coalitions directed against any of the contracting parties.

The reactionary quarters in the Baltic states became increasingly active in secretly sounding Berlin in order to obtain assurances of support from Germany. The Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona went farther in this respect than the others. In February 1940 he sent the chief of the state security department A. Povilaitis on a secret mission to Berlin to request the nazis to establish their protectorate over Lithuania, to take it

under their wing politically. The nazi government did not have to be begged—it promised to do this by approximately the autumn of 1940.¹

The reliance on support from nazi Germany was what nourished the provocative actions of the ruling quarters in the Baltic states. In keeping with secret agreements with Germany, some 70 per cent of the exports of the three Baltic states in the first half of 1940 went to the Third Reich.² The nazis assiduously planted their agents in the Baltic region. On June 26, 1940, the US envoy in Riga John C. Wiley reported to Washington that the Latvian Prime Minister had told him: "...in Latvia, as elsewhere, there was a fifth column of pro-Germans."³

While the ruling elite of the Baltic states sought closer relations with Germany and intensified the anti-Soviet thrust of its foreign policy and the reactionary trends in home policy, opposite processes were developing just as quickly in these countries: the revolutionisation of the working people and their rapid involvement in active political life on the side of the democratic forces and the communist parties. A powerful mass movement for closer friendship with the Soviet Union was swiftly gaining momentum.

The threat of nazism and the activities of internal reaction led to a further exacerbation of the situation in the Baltic states themselves. Repressions by the fascist regimes of Smetona, Ulmanis, and Pāts against the working people could not halt the mounting popular disaffection with the actions of the ruling quarters in these countries.

In this situation a decision passed on March 3, 1940, by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia, the April Conference of the Communist Party of Estonia, and the appeals issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania in April-May 1940 called upon the working people of the Baltic states to step up their struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the fascist governments that were pursuing an increasingly provocative policy towards the USSR. By the spring

¹ *Socialist Revolutions in 1940 in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Restoration of Soviet Power*, Moscow, 1978, p. 228 (in Russian).

² A. A. Drizul, *Latvia under Nazi Yoke*, Riga, 1960, p. 278 (in Russian).

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1940, Vol. I, 1959, p. 380.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

of 1940 united anti-fascist fronts demanding an end to the fascist ruling regimes had been formed in all the three Baltic states under pressure from the democratic forces. The task was set of purging the state apparatus of fascist elements and creating popular front governments. The conflict between the policies of the ruling quarters and the demands of the masses in the Baltic states became insuperable. Estonia's Minister for the Interior A. Jurimaa acknowledged that had the people been allowed to have their say the country would have been bolshevised within two months.¹ A revolutionary crisis began to develop in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Popular action reached a magnitude where the governments of the Baltic states no longer ventured to resort openly to military force to suppress the revolutionary movement. For that reason they supported the so-called Baltic Week planned by fascist political groups to demonstrate cohesion among the anti-Soviet forces in the Baltic region and disband democratic organisations. The affair was planned for June 15, 1940, but it was foiled by the working people of the Baltic states and the Soviet Union.

Of course, the Soviet Union could not consider the policies of the ruling quarters in the Baltic states in isolation from what was happening in Europe as a whole. Germany, which had in effect achieved its main military-political aims in the West, could use the Baltic region as a bridgehead for aggression against the USSR. The situation thus demanded immediate extraordinary action by the USSR.

On June 14, 1940, the Soviet government demanded that the government of Lithuania take measures against the Minister for the Interior K. Skučas and the chief of the state security department A. Povilaitis as persons heading the campaign of provocations against the Soviet garrison in Lithuania. Moreover, it demanded permission for additional Soviet troops to be stationed in Lithuania in order to bring their numerical strength up to the level allowing them to fulfil the terms of the treaty. On June 15, 1940, the Lithuanian government acceded to these requests. On June 16, analogous statements were made to the governments of

¹ *Essays on the History of the Communist Party of Estonia, Part 2 (The 1920s-1940s)*, Tallinn, 1963, p. 382 (in Russian).

Estonia and Latvia, which likewise acceded to the Soviet requests.

The stand adopted by the USSR was approved and supported by the working masses in the Baltic states. An additional contingent of Soviet troops arrived in Lithuania on June 15 and in Latvia and Estonia on June 17.

Demonstrations calling for an end to the anti-people policies of the governments swept across the whole Baltic region on June 15-21. Tremendous popular pressure compelled the ruling quarters in the Baltic states to retreat. On June 15 Antanas Smetona fled to Germany, the fascist regime fell, and a people's government headed by the prominent public figure and writer Justas Paleckis came to power in Lithuania on June 17. As a result of revolutionary pressure from the working people, a popular government headed by Professor August Kirhenstein was formed in Latvia on June 20. On June 21, the socialist revolution destroyed the buttress of the Konstantin Pāts regime in Estonia, and a people's government headed by the well-known Estonian poet and doctor Johannes Vares (Barbarus) was formed in Estonia on the same day.

Free elections to the people's sejms (diets) of Latvia and Lithuania and the State Duma of Estonia were held on July 14 and 15, 1940. These elections were a sweeping triumph for the working people headed by the Communists. The Union of the Working People of Lithuania won 99.19 per cent of the votes, the Bloc of the Working People of Latvia-97.8 per cent, and the Union of the Working People of Estonia-92.8 per cent.¹

On July 21-22, the supreme legislative bodies passed decisions to restore Soviet power in the Baltic states and to seek their incorporation in the USSR. In early August 1940, the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR granted the requests of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia for admission to the USSR as Union republics enjoying equal rights with the other republics. "It was enough to ask the working people of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia," said deputy A. S. Shcherbakov at the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, "what sort of government they wanted and give them the opportunity

¹ *Socialist Revolutions in 1940 in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Restoration of Soviet Power*, p. 342.

to state their will freely for matters to move in a direction different from what the bourgeois politicians wanted. The working people of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were unanimous in declaring that the new life was the Soviet way of life, and that the new popular power was only the Soviet power."¹

The triumph of the revolutionary forces in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the restoration of Soviet power in these republics, and their admission as equal republics to the USSR fundamentally changed the situation in this part of Europe. Instead of creating a springboard for aggression against the USSR the developments in the Baltic region brought the imperialists something quite different.

In the broad international context the steps taken by the USSR to reinforce its security in the west and northwest in this period signified that the maximum was done to counter fascist aggression and the anti-Soviet activities of the Anglo-French coalition, to consolidate Soviet Union's position in the world.

Chapter 3 THE USSR'S RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND THE USA

1. THE USSR AND THE ANGLO-FRENCH COALITION AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By remaining militarily inactive during the German-Polish war Britain and France in effect saved Germany from the constant nightmare of its military leaders, the nightmare of hostilities on two fronts. But in Berlin, having gone beyond all the limits of a strategic risk in September 1939, they did not tempt fate any further. Although there still were pockets of resistance in Poland, the Wehrmacht command began transferring troops to the West. By November 1939, it had 96 large units massed on the Western front. "By and large, time will work against us if we do not now make the maximum use of it," Hitler said on September 27, characterising the situation. "The other side has a larger economic potential... Militarily, too, time is not working for us... For that reason we should not wait until the enemy comes here; we should strike in the western direction... The quicker the better."¹ It was then that Germany's next strategic task was set—to crush France as the greatest force confronting Germany in Europe.² As before, Germany was saved by the reluctance of its imperialist adversaries to fight a real war.

Britain's strategic conception was most clearly defined in a programme endorsed by the War Cabinet on October 28, 1939. It boiled down to the idea of passively waiting. Priority was

¹ *Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. August 1-August 7, 1940. Verbatim Report, Moscow, 1940, p. 35 (in Russian).*

¹ Generaloberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch, Vol. I, Vom Polenfeldzug bis zum Ende der Westoffensive (14.8.1939-30.6.1940)*, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1963, pp. 86, 88.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

given to ensuring the security of the British Isles against the German air force and navy and, in particular, protecting British interests in the Middle East, India, and Singapore.¹ As regards France, the pivot of its government's war plan for 1940 was the thesis that there be no large-scale operations along the front against Germany.²

To the British and French military and government leaders it seemed that a quick implementation of the design to turn the ongoing world war from a confrontation of capitalist powers into a joint military crusade against the USSR would be much more gainful than the war against Germany. Underlying this conception was the calculation that Germany and Japan would be influenced by the force of example. They held that all that was needed was a beginning which would fuel the "natural" aspirations of the aggressor powers and prompt them to join such a crusade. "This conception, spread among French political circles, led to the belief that there would be no serious impediment to armed intervention against Russia,"³ General Maurice Gamelin wrote in his memoirs.

INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE APPROACHES OF THE SIDES TO MUTUAL RELATIONS

On September 17, 1939, the governments of Britain and France were informed in a note from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR that the Soviet Union would pursue a policy of neutrality relative to them. Further, the note said that the Soviet Armed Forces had entered the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia and provided the substantiation for this extraordinary measure. Paris promptly began looking for a "hidden meaning" in the Soviet actions. On September 18, 1939, Edouard Daladier put the relevant question to the Soviet ambassador to France Y. Z. Surits.⁴ A similar question was put by Jean Payart,⁵ the French charge d'affaires ad interim in

¹ Public Record Office, Cab. 66/3, pp. 36-38.

² Général Gamelin, *Servir*, Vol. III, *La guerre (septembre 1939-19 mai 1940)*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1947, pp. 233-34.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

⁵ After the French ambassador Paule-Émile Naggiar departed from Moscow in May 1939, Jean Payart was appointed charge d'affaires ad interim,

the USSR, to V. P. Potemkin, the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, on September 20, 1939. Potemkin replied that the Soviet neutrality declaration should have left the British and the French governments with no objective grounds for expecting any complications with the Soviet Union.¹

In London the efforts to sound the Soviet stand were more comprehensive. On September 23—for the first time since the outbreak of the war—there was an official meeting between the Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and the Soviet ambassador I. M. Maisky. The Foreign Secretary put three basic questions to the ambassador:

"1. What was the Soviet government's opinion about the state of Anglo-Soviet relations and . . . would there be sense for the British government to enter into trade talks with the Soviet Union in time of war?

"2. What was the Soviet government's idea about Poland's future? Specifically, was the existing demarcation line a temporary wartime measure or was it of a more permanent nature?

"3. What was the Soviet government's view of the European situation? Were the principles of Soviet foreign policy (struggle against aggression, support for victims of aggression), which he, the Foreign Secretary, had grown used to associating with the USSR, still in force or had any significant change occurred in the character of Soviet foreign policy?"²

On September 26, 1939, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs gave the ambassador the guidelines for a reply to Halifax: "Relative to the first question: if Britain is sincere it could begin trade talks with the USSR, for the USSR is and intends to remain neutral during the war in Western Europe provided, of course, that Britain itself does not, by its behaviour towards the USSR, push it into involvement in the war. Relative to the second question: the present demarcation line is not, of course, the state frontier between Germany and the USSR. The destiny of the future Poland depends on many factors and opposite forces, which cannot be taken into account at present. Relative to the third question: the principles of Soviet foreign policy have

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

not changed. As regards Soviet-German relations, they are determined by the non-aggression pact."¹ These replies were conveyed to the British Foreign Secretary on September 27, 1939. That same day the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR sent the Soviet ambassador to France a directive stating: "As regards the substance of Daladier's question, you may be guided by my replies to questions put by Halifax."² This concretisation of the Soviet Union's stand in connection with the ongoing war made it clear that given reciprocity the USSR was prepared for normal, constructive development of relations with Germany's adversaries and for strengthening trade and economic links with them.

What was the response to this by Germany's imperialist adversaries? For Britain and France, and also for the USA the "phoney war" in Europe was a period when the combination of anti-Sovietism with the lack of political and military foresight and the absence of elementary common sense had in many ways practically the same damaging consequences as the prewar Munich policy. The policy of inaction in the hope of an anti-Soviet compromise with the aggressor, pursued until September 1, 1939, was continued by military inaction calculated to achieve the same compromise, to impel Germany to a war against the USSR. After September 1 the Western powers intensified their efforts to precipitate such a war in spite of the fact that their possibilities for this had now been reduced by the Soviet-German non-aggression pact. As the US ambassador in Moscow Laurence A. Steinhardt cabled the State Department on September 27, 1939, "there has been a strong tendency in French and British diplomatic circles here to entertain the hope that friction has or will shortly arise between the two countries (Germany and the USSR.—P. S.)."³ This policy towards the USSR was supplemented by Britain and France with strong political and economic pressure up to attempts to organise military intervention against the USSR.

The selfsame Steinhardt quite clearly described the aims and

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1939*, Vol. I, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1956, p. 455.

character of Anglo-French diplomacy in respect of the USSR during the "phoney war". On October 2, 1940, he wrote to Washington: "The fundamental error of Allied, and subsequently British, diplomacy in respect of the Soviet Union has been that it has at all times been directed toward attempting to persuade the Soviet Union to undertake positive action which if not leading immediately to an armed conflict with Germany would at least involve the real risk of such a contingency." This activity, Steinhardt quite rightly emphasised, had no chance of success. "...It is most unlikely," he continued, "that the Soviet Union will through any serious negotiations or agreement with Great Britain provoke the very event which its entire policy is designed to prevent, namely, involvement in war against the Axis Powers."¹

In the main issues of their attitude to the USSR the postures of London and Paris coincided. A certain specific of the French attitude compared with that of the British was that the French government was more active in giving prominence to anti-Sovietism and took less trouble to hide behind "back-up" manoeuvres relative to the USSR. The ruling quarters in France were, in the initial period of the Second World War, more frank than those in Britain in interpreting the Munich anti-Soviet line. The Soviet ambassador to France Y. Z. Surits reported to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR on October 18, 1939, that in Paris they were still counting on setting the USSR and Germany against each other. "Hence the task of official propaganda: to inflame in every way what can cause immediate differences between Germany and the USSR, intimidate Germany and neutral states with the bogey of "Red menace" arising from the present state of Soviet-German relations and, at the same time, exercise some measure of caution in regard to direct attacks on the USSR."²

British and French diplomacy seized upon any occasion to aggravate relations between the Soviet Union and Germany. One of these occasions was the arrival in Moscow on September 25, 1939, of the Turkish Foreign Minister Sükrü Saracoglu to negotiate a pact with the USSR on mutual assistance relative to

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. I, 1959, p. 616.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

the Straits and the Balkans. He met with Laurence A. Steinhardt, who reported to Washington on October 17, 1939: "The Foreign Minister was frank in stating that Great Britain had sought to make use of the Turkish-Soviet negotiations in an attempt to drive a wedge between Germany and the Soviet Union."¹

At the fifth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on October 31, 1939, V. M. Molotov confirmed that the USSR was continuing to abide by a policy of neutrality. But in the French government the new assurance about the USSR's neutrality was misinterpreted. Since the USSR was preserving its neutrality, they reasoned in Paris, the anti-Soviet line could be intensified without fearing a Soviet-German "rapprochement". The French censorship was instructed to give the press "a free hand" relative to the USSR. "Whereas formerly the directive given to the press was to avoid, where possible, anything that might irritate the Soviet Union and accentuate everything that could aggravate relations between the USSR and Germany, now the general anti-Soviet campaign is being intensified,"² the Soviet embassy wrote. On November 3, 1939, the Soviet ambassador to France reported that after the statement made by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR the press was told that all former directives were void and it could rip into us."³

UNREALITY OF DECLARATIONS AND REALITY OF ANTI-SOVIETISM

By October 1939 it had become clear that there was more than propaganda pressure in the attitude of Britain and France towards the USSR after the outbreak of the Second World War. Concurrently—this applies chiefly to British diplomacy—Germany's adversaries engaged in a sort of "insurance". The aim was to soften somewhat their anti-Sovietism and to give the Soviet leadership an illusion that London and Paris had adopted a "constructive" approach to the USSR and thereby avoid pushing it, by their actions, towards Germany. Practical actions of

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939*, Vol. I, p. 486.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

this kind were started in October 1939. On October 6, 1939, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, told the Soviet ambassador that the British government would like to develop trade with the Soviet Union and that it was prepared to discuss any other steps that could help to improve relations.¹ On October 8, 1939, the British Minister of Health Walter Elliot spoke to the Soviet ambassador of the British government's desire to normalise relations with the USSR and readiness to do everything to achieve that aim. At the end of the talk Elliot casually asked whether an Anglo-Soviet non-aggression pact was conceivable.²

On October 13, 1939, I. M. Maisky met with Anthony Eden, a member of the Chamberlain War Cabinet. Eden asserted that the question of improving Britain's relations with the USSR had been raised in British government circles. He added that the British government was very interested in relaxing the existing tension and melting the accumulated ice, and that in this context it was willing to do something that the Soviet government would accept as evidence of the good faith of the British government. Britain, Eden said, was thinking of two possible steps: sending a responsible delegation to Moscow, headed by a high-ranking official, chiefly for talks on questions of trade; recalling William Seeds and replacing him with a person regarded as more authoritative by the Soviet government.³

On October 16, 1939, there was a talk between the Soviet ambassador and the British Foreign Secretary. Speaking of the British government's desire to improve relations with the Soviet Union, Halifax reiterated that he felt trade negotiations would be the best beginning.⁴

All these looked like promising approaches. But the question arose of what in fact the British were offering the Soviet Union in this sounding apart from something that the Soviet government would regard as evidence of the British government's good faith? In terms of concrete steps, nothing was offered. Faith was, as always, proved not by words but by deeds of

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

the British, and these were fundamentally at variance with declarations. The fact was that the British regarded their hostile acts against the USSR in that selfsame trade and economic sphere as compatible with continued contacts with the USSR on questions of trade, and gave this out as an indication of their desire for better relations with the Soviet Union. There indeed was some British interest in trade with the USSR, but it was more than overshadowed by London's aspiration to give a semblance of constructiveness to its relations with Moscow in the hope that this would, first, aggravate relations between the USSR and Germany and, second, strengthen Britain's hand in the search for a political compromise with Germany. This aspiration manifested itself in secret contacts with the latter. But the main thing was that London and, especially, Paris were actively pursuing a policy that was anti-Soviet.

In the sphere of trade Britain and France were fighting an "economic war" in real terms against the USSR, seeing it as a paramount instrument of political pressure. In violation of the universally recognised international principle of freedom of navigation, Britain declared in September 1939 that it would inspect ships flying neutral flags. Under the pretext of clamping down on contraband the British government began the illegal detention and inspection of Soviet ships and foreign vessels chartered by Soviet organisations.

As regards the Daladier government, its actions were even more brazen: it confiscated equipment and armaments ordered by the Soviet Union in France, impounded the money and valuables of the Soviet trade mission in Paris and of other Soviet foreign trade organisations, detained Soviet ships and freight purchased for the Soviet Union, and so on. All these actions were taken precisely at a time when diplomats of the Anglo-French coalition were talking of a desire for "better" relations with the USSR.

Britain and France waged their economic war against the Soviet Union chiefly on the pretext of "punishing" the Soviet Union for what they termed trade-economic "assistance" to Germany. However, in Moscow they knew what political aims were actually being pursued by means of these actions. As was pointed out by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, "British and French hostile acts against the Soviet Union are

motivated not by Soviet trade with Germany but by the failure of the British and French ruling quarters to use our country in the war against Germany, and hence their policy of vengeance towards the Soviet Union".¹

One more aspect of the anti-Soviet policies pursued by Paris and London, an aspect that imperilled Soviet security most of all, surfaced soon after the Second World War broke out. The Anglo-French prewar subversion of the USSR's efforts to prevent a world war and the purposeful attempts of the Munichmen to isolate the USSR and expose it to a strike by aggressor powers from two fronts did not rule out the desire of the British and French to use their own forces to damage the Soviet Union militarily.

When the Red Army entered the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia reactionary political forces in France began talking about "performing their allied duty to Poland" up to a declaration of war on the USSR. The French General Staff worked on plans "to promote direct action against Russia, using Rumania as a theatre of war".²

Paris also took a negative stand towards the conclusion between the USSR and the Baltic states of treaties of mutual assistance, which strengthened peace and security in that part of Europe. In early October 1939 Y. Z. Surits wrote to Moscow: "For a number of years our enemies have been seeking to oust us out of Europe. This, in effect, was the purpose of the entire Munich plan; this was what Chamberlain made arrangements about in Munich; this was the subject of Ribbentrop's talks in Paris; and here suddenly, after only five weeks of war, the USSR had moved into advanced positions in Europe. This is indeed enough to be roused to a fury."³

At the close of October 1939 the British Chiefs of Staff Committee considered the "relative advantages and disadvantages" which would accrue to Britain if it were to declare war on the

¹ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, March 29-April 4, 1940. Verbatim Report, Moscow, 1940, p. 28 (in Russian).*

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1954, p. 711.*

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

USSR.¹ In France they toyed with the idea of attacking Soviet oilfields at the very outbreak of the war.

It was then that Alfred Chatfield, Minister for Coordination of Defence, presented to the Committee a government paper under the heading "Russia: Vulnerability of Oil Supplies". This paper contained, among other things, one of the aims of strategic planning: "The capture or destruction of any great city in Russia, particularly of Leningrad, would prove a signal for internal anti-Communist riots."² In November 1939, the French foreign ministry raised the question before the military about planning an operation against the Soviet Caucasus.³

The British Cabinet and the chiefs of staffs closely studied the possibility of involving Japan in the war. A telegram from the British envoy in Finland, which figured at one of the meetings of the British Cabinet, said: "I venture to suggest (a) that Stalin is a more likely winner than Herr Hitler (in the ongoing Second World War.—P.S.) and ... is accordingly possibly the greater menace of the two ... the question arises how the Soviet (Union.—Ed.) could be damaged and I venture accordingly to suggest the extreme desirability of giving ear and the most unprejudiced consideration possible to the conclusion of an arrangement with Japan."⁴ Taking into consideration the feeling in London, the Japanese General Staff was at this period considering an Anglo-Japanese military alliance directed against the USSR as the most probable.

In Moscow they saw the glaring contradiction between the declarations by the British sponsors of a "constructive" line and the general hostile course pursued by Germany's imperialist adversaries. On November 11, 1939, the Soviet ambassador in London received a highly important directive from Moscow, which said: "In connection with your talks with Churchill, Elliot, Eden, and others on the desirability of improving Anglo-Soviet political and trade relations, you may declare, when the opportunity arises, that the Soviet government appreciates their desire, but since these persons do not decide British policy at present

¹ Public Record Office, Cab. 66/3, pp. 71-76.

² Public Record Office, Cab. 80/4, p. 296.

³ Y. V. Borisov, *Soviet-French Relations (1924-1945)*, Moscow, 1964, p. 456 (in Russian).

⁴ Public Record Office, Cab. 66/3, p. 77.

the USSR does not see favourable prospects in this matter at the given time. The facts indicate, however, that the British government has actually adopted a hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union. We feel this every day in all parts of Europe and Asia, from Scandinavia (especially Finland) to the Balkans and the Near Asia, to say nothing of the Far East. An improvement of relations between the USSR and Britain requires a change for the better in this policy of the British authorities."¹

2. FROM ANTI-SOVIETISM TO PLANNING AN ATTACK ON THE USSR IN THE NORTH

FURTHER AGGRAVATION OF THE USSR'S RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN AND FRANCE

In the Soviet Union's relations with Germany's imperialist adversaries early December 1939 saw British assurance of their desire for friendship with the USSR. In a conversation with I. M. Maisky on December 2, in spite of the facts, Richard Butler gave the assurance that the British government had no anti-Soviet plans in connection with the aggravation of Soviet-Finnish relations.²

This was far from being the case. The line towards consolidating the capitalist powers on an anti-Soviet basis, pursued by Britain and France, and supported by the USA, became particularly visible in the period of the Soviet-Finnish conflict.

That same day, December 2, Y. Z. Surits reported from Paris that in France the USSR "is listed as a direct enemy". On December 9 the Soviet embassy reported that the Daladier government was sharply intensifying its anti-Soviet course.³

On December 14, 1939, under pressure from Britain and France, the League of Nations played out the farce of "expelling" the USSR. On the same day, in connection with the USSR's "expulsion" from the League of Nations, TASS issued a statement strongly denouncing the anti-Soviet line of the Anglo-

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

French coalition. "In the first place, it should be stressed that the ruling quarters in Britain and France, under whose dictation the Council of the League of Nations passed its resolution, have neither the moral nor the formal right to speak of Soviet 'aggression' or of condemning this 'aggression'."¹ On December 16, 1939, the League's Council passed a resolution calling upon member states to extend maximum assistance to Finland. The USA introduced a "moral embargo" on trade with the USSR and extended economic and military assistance to Finland. All sorts of inventions about "Soviet expansionism", the "Soviet military threat", and so on were spread in the West. As before, the initiative in intensifying pressure on the USSR came from the Daladier government. French diplomacy played the key role in the USSR's "expulsion" from the League of Nations.

A campaign to sever diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which dovetailed with the open calls for war against the USSR, commenced in France in early December 1939.

Anti-Sovietism became increasingly blatant in British policy as the armed conflict between the USSR and Finland developed. On December 15, 1939, the Soviet embassy in London sent to Moscow its assessment of the situation: "The British government will continue to render Finland all possible political and diplomatic assistance, as well as assistance with supplies including armaments."² On December 23 it reported: "Soviet-British relations are sharply deteriorating."³

For its part, the Soviet government continued to combine its firm resistance to Britain's anti-Soviet line with restraint and presence of mind. On the last day of 1939 V. M. Molotov had an important talk in Moscow with the British ambassador William Seeds. "The Finnish question," he said, "has now become the most acute. For two months the USSR sought to come to an understanding with Finland on the basis of the most minimal wish to ensure the security of Leningrad, but this yielded nothing." V. M. Molotov stressed that had nobody incited Finland against the USSR an agreement with it would have been pos-

sible. "The Soviet government is aware that Finland is being armed against the USSR with the help of Britain and some other countries. The USSR's expulsion from the League of Nations was, as everybody can understand, likewise not a friendly act towards the USSR... Relative to Britain the Soviet Union has no hostile intentions, to say nothing of the absence of hostile acts. But as for the British government, it not only has hostile intentions towards the USSR, as is evident in many instances, but resorts to hostile acts. An improvement of relations between Britain and the USSR therefore depends above all on Britain, not on the USSR."¹

Reporting this talk of December 31, 1939, Seeds wrote from Moscow that the Soviet government "bore no enmity to Great Britain, but were convinced of our acts all over the world that His Majesty's government was unfriendly to Russia".²

AN ATTACK IS PREPARED ASPACE

What question could there be of an improvement of relations with Britain and France when, as was subsequently acknowledged by the former French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud, the ruling quarters in these countries were preparing to take an active part in the Soviet-Finnish conflict on the side of Finland.³ Even without Reynaud's admission, archival documents irrefutably prove that at the close of 1939 the leadership of Britain and France was preparing to intervene on the side of the Finnish militarists from the north and the south.

On January 5, 1940, the Soviet ambassador in Paris reported to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that in France they were openly discussing possible military targets in the USSR. "These are Leningrad and Murmansk, on the one side, and the Black Sea and the Caucasus, on the other. The ruling quarters in France and Britain consider the USSR a belligerent. They are forming diplomatic fronts against it, and in their 'war

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, p. 475 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

¹ *Ibid.*

² Public Record Office, Foreign Office, 418/86, p. 13.

³ Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauvé l'Europe*, Vol. II, Flammarion, Paris, 1947, p. 13.

objectives' have included a struggle against the USSR without which they cannot conceive of a full and final victory."¹ On January 19, 1940, the French Deputy Foreign Minister Camille Chautemps officially told the Senate that France intended to give "every possible" assistance to Finland.²

The British government planned to use the Polish émigré government's troops in Britain and France for operations in Finland. On January 28, 1940, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee approved a draft report concerning limited aspects of an intervention by Polish troops in the Petsamo-Murmansk area. Concurrently, the Committee passed a decision to request the Foreign Office to study the possible reaction of neutral nations to a large-scale allied intervention in support of Finland, especially the reaction of Scandinavian countries, Turkey, Italy, Japan, and the USA.

The Soviet government took timely counter-measures to block the Anglo-French coalition's attempts to involve the neutral Scandinavian nations in its anti-Soviet policy. As early as January 5, 1940, the Soviet ambassadors in Oslo and Stockholm were instructed to make an official statement, on behalf of the Soviet government, to the Norwegian and Swedish foreign ministers in connection with the continued hostile campaign over the Soviet-Finnish armed conflict to the effect that any departure from traditional neutrality and involvement in Anglo-French policies would not benefit these nations. This step by the Soviet government considerably influenced the posture of the ruling quarters in the Scandinavian countries. Sweden and Norway confirmed their desire to have normal relations with the USSR.

Meanwhile, the general staffs of the Anglo-French coalition continued to plan an armed intervention against the Soviet Union. The French military leadership suggested a two-phased military operation against the USSR in the north: the first would be a naval expedition in Petsamo to cut off communication between that port and Murmansk; the second would be the landing of a task force in Petsamo.

Archives help us to bring to light the key to the Anglo-French attitude to the Soviet Union in the initial period of the Second

World War—London and Paris looked for an opportunity to provoke the USSR into action that could be used to isolate it. This design and the practical measures that were taken to implement it reveal how "sincere" the British and the French were in their declarations about "improving relations with the USSR". For the USSR it was obvious that by continuing to abide by the Munich political conception Germany's imperialist adversaries were themselves undermining the possibility for establishing constructive relations.

On February 5, 1940, the Anglo-French Supreme Allied Council passed a decision on sending an expeditionary force of over 100,000 effectives to Finland; half of this force was to be ready for departure at the close of February. In other words, preparations were made to send British and French troops not to the theatre of hostilities against Nazi Germany but to the theatre of the Soviet-Finnish conflict.

Also on February 5, 1940, the question of breaking off diplomatic relations with the USSR was raised again. Once more it was found desirable that here the initiative should come from the Soviet Union. The US ambassador to France William Bullitt reported: "The French position is that France will not break diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union or declare war on the Soviet Union but will, if possible, destroy the Soviet Union—using cannon if necessary."¹

However, the Daladier government did not venture to take this step unilaterally. Daladier said with regret that neither Britain nor Turkey wanted the least onus for a diplomatic or military rupture with the Soviet Union. As Y. Z. Surits wrote in a letter to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the campaign for breaking off diplomatic relations had the nature of blackmail.²

On February 11, 1940, I. M. Maisky had another meeting with David Lloyd George. "Lloyd George is of the opinion that since the start of the Finnish events Soviet-British relations have been steadily deteriorating and are now in a very dangerous state... In connection with the protraction of the operations in Finland

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. I, p. 277.*

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

... there is the danger of their further deterioration, and, under certain conditions, of even a rupture and war between the countries." It was most vital, Lloyd George said, that the USSR "should not allow itself to be provoked into breaking off relations and into war in spite of all the attempts in this direction by Britain and France".¹

On February 16, 1940, Richard Butler stated the British government's view to the Soviet ambassador: On the one hand, he said, the British government would like to "save Finland" but, on the other, it would not like to bring matters to a break, let alone war, with the USSR. In the opinion of the British government the best way out of the situation would be a peaceful settlement of the Finnish-Soviet dispute. Butler wanted to know if such a settlement was feasible and whether mediation was conceivable. He then spoke of a "localisation" of the Finnish issue. As he saw it, "localisation" meant that the USSR would be fighting with Finland, while Britain would be helping the latter within the limits of the day, namely, by sending weapons, aircraft, and other armaments, as well as volunteers. However, Butler said, localisation rules out the sending of British regular troops to Finland. Further, he declared that the British government could agree to some reduction of aid to Finland if it was certain that Sweden and Norway were not threatened. In the event of such a threat to Scandinavia Britain would without doubt intervene most actively in the event.²

Butler's statement eloquently revealed the typical features of London's attitude to relations with the USSR and, in particular, the hypocrisy of British diplomacy.

First, the statement about "localisation", which, according to Butler, ruled out the sending of British regular troops to Finland, was made 11 days after the Anglo-French Supreme Allied Council had decided on sending an expeditionary corps of over 100,000 effectives to the theatre of the Soviet-Finnish conflict, planning to land them not in Finland but in Narvik and other Norwegian ports. These troops were to operate not as regulars but as "volunteers". The Butler formula of "localisation" thus fitted into the planned intervention. Against the background of

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

this intervention the anti-Soviet edge of this formula was only too plain.

Second, London continued to be worried about the excessive aggravation of its relations with Moscow. Hence the echo, in Butler's statements, of the British government's desire to "insure" itself, to play at "two tables" at one and the same time, especially as the military situation was inexorably growing worse for the Finnish militarists. Hence, the soundings about a "peaceful settlement" and about the possibility of "mediation".

Lastly, Butler's arguments about the Scandinavian countries were clearly artificial. The USSR did not threaten the neutrality of Sweden and Norway. It was the Anglo-French coalition that was trying to make these countries renounce their neutrality and involve them in war. As to the Soviet government, it had told these countries that it was desirable that they should preserve their neutrality and upheld this neutrality relative to Germany as well. Using an invented Soviet "threat" to Sweden and Norway as a pretext, London and Paris prepared the ground for sending troops to these countries. Moreover, the linking of guarantees of the security of the Scandinavian countries with a promise of "some reduction" of aid to the Finns was on Britain's part a quest, launched in advance, for an "honourable" way out of the situation over the Soviet-Finnish conflict in the event nothing came of London's stake on the Finnish militarists. The subsequent activation of the British "pseudo-constructive" line confirmed that London was indeed "insuring" itself.

On February 21, 1940, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs sent I. M. Maisky a directive for a reply to Butler: "The Soviet government has no claims on Sweden and Norway... To avoid misunderstanding it would like to inform the British government that it would agree to talks and an accord with the Ryt-Tanner government only if the stated conditions for a guarantee of the security of Leningrad are accepted."¹ But, as before, the ruling quarters in Britain refused to take the interests of the USSR's security into account. London backed down from mediation on the mutually beneficial terms offered by the Soviet Union. The course was still towards military intervention against the USSR.

¹ *Ibid.*

A CRITICAL POINT

At the close of February and the beginning of March 1940 the anti-Soviet activities of Britain and France, and also of the USA, over the Soviet-Finnish conflict were approaching a critical point.

The governments of Britain and France hurried to get the Scandinavian countries to agree to the transit of their expeditionary forces across their territory to Finland. On March 2 the British and French envoys in Oslo called on the Norwegian Foreign Ministry where they officially asked if British and French troops could pass across Norway. An analogous demarche was made in Stockholm on the same day. The envoys said that the Allied powers had already formed an expeditionary corps and were prepared to send it to Finland if the Finnish government asked for British and French military assistance. In the event Sweden and Norway faced the danger of being involved in the war against Germany as a result of the landing of Allied troops, Britain and France promised to give them extensive military assistance.¹

The replies from the Swedish (March 3) and the Norwegian (March 4) governments were negative. Both countries did not want to be drawn into a war as the Anglo-French coalition was in fact prompting them. Moreover, not the least factor determining the stand of these countries was the January warning of the Soviet government that it would be undesirable for them to violate their neutrality towards the USSR.

The Soviet historian V. G. Trukhanovsky notes with justification: "At the final stage of the war Britain and France were ready to move their troops to Finland to join the Finns in fighting the USSR. But what about the war against Germany? The former President of Czechoslovakia Edward Beneš, who was close to British and French government circles, wrote that in the winter of 1939-1940 they were bent on taking their countries into a war against the USSR and coming to terms with Germany: 'Germany was then to attack only the Soviet Union, after making peace with the Western powers'. *The Times* wrote at the

¹ John Midgaard, 9 April 1940, Dagen OG Forspillet, Forlagt AV, H. Aschehoug & Co., Oslo, 1960, p. 73.

time about an eventual regrouping of the powers, including Germany, in the anti-Soviet front."¹

Writing of the aims of the Anglo-French bustle over intervention in the Soviet-Finnish military conflict, the British historian Alan J. P. Taylor points out: "The motives for the projected expedition to Finland defy rational analysis. For Great Britain and France to provoke war with Soviet Russia when already at war with Germany seems the product of a madhouse, and it is tempting to suggest a more sinister plan: switching the war to an anti-Bolshevik course, so that the war against Germany could be forgotten or even ended."²

"It is not at all the defence of small nations or the defence of the rights of the members of the League of Nations that explains the support of the British and French ruling circles for Finland against the Soviet Union," said V. M. Molotov at the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. "The explanation for this support is that in Finland they had a ready military bridgehead for an attack on the USSR."³

3. PAYMENT FOR ANTI-SOVIET BLINDNESS

On October 19, 1939, the German military command ordered the massing and deployment of troops for an operation in the West code-named Case Gelb. The date of the offensive was set before mid-November 1939. For various reasons, chiefly the incompleteness of the military preparations, the implementation of this plan was put off repeatedly. However, the Wehrmacht fighting capacity was being swiftly increased. Light divisions were reformed into panzer divisions. The artillery strength was increased by 3,000 anti-tank guns and artillery pieces of a calibre larger than 75 mm. The number of combat aircraft grew by

¹ Quoted from V. G. Trukhanovsky, *Anthony Eden. Pages From British Diplomacy. 1930s-1950s*, Moscow, 1974, p. 211 (in Russian).

² Alan J. P. Taylor, *English History. 1914-1945*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965, p. 469.

³ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, March 29-April 4, 1940*, p. 34.

nearly 1,500. By March 1940 the German army had grown to 3,300,000 officers and men.¹ Nazi Germany made full use of the preoccupation of its imperialist adversaries on the fronts of anti-Sovietism and their inaction on the western front.

PLANNING INTERVENTION AGAINST THE USSR IN THE SOUTH

Even as only a few weeks remained before the Nazi blitzkrieg against France, the Anglo-French coalition continued to occupy itself with anti-Soviet intrigues. Its headquarters continued planning interventionist operations against the USSR in the south.

The sixth meeting of the Supreme Allied Council held on March 28, 1940, in London and attended by Chamberlain, Halifax, Churchill, and other British leaders, and also the new French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud and the French military leadership, acting on the initiative of France, passed decision to bomb the Soviet oilfields in the Caucasus. Chamberlain warned the French that this bombing "would mean war with the Soviet Union".² Concurrently, the Anglo-French command considered plans for concentrating in the Middle East 15 bomber groups aimed at the Soviet Transcaucasian oilfields. The French General Staff calculated that 100 bombers from Middle East bases could within six days destroy the Baku and Grozny oilfields and over 30 per cent of the Soviet Black Sea ports facilities. At sittings of the French Cabinet on April 4 and 12, 1940, these plans were approved by a majority of the ministers.

The leaders of the Anglo-French coalition, the French government in the first place, were largely guided by the belief that the participation or complicity of Turkey and Iran in this intervention was a matter of course. It was planned, for instance, that British and French submarines would be based at Turkish ports and have the combat mission of disrupting Soviet shipping in the Black Sea. Moreover, it was taken for granted that

Turkey and Iran would permit French bombers to cross their air space from bases in Syria for raids in the Soviet Transcaucasus. It was even presumed that the Turkish government would be prepared to provide ground forces for an anti-Soviet intervention.

This attitude to the USSR's southern neighbours clearly stemmed from an underestimation of the effectiveness of Soviet foreign policy, which was working to neutralise anti-Soviet manifestations in Turkish and Iranian policies. Soviet policy played a major role in determining the ultimate attitude of these two countries to the interventionist plans of the Anglo-French coalition. Neither Turkey nor Iran expressed readiness to participate in hostilities against the USSR.

On April 26, 1940, the War Committee of the Supreme Allied Council considered possible military operations against the USSR in the Caucasus with Romania as the base. Paul Reynaud told of the French General Staff's proposals for setting up air bases in various Middle East countries and in the Balkans, including Romania.¹ The Romanian rulers, however, were not overenthusiastic about these plans, for their implementation would involve Romania in a war with the USSR. The monarchist regime in Bucharest feared that military collaboration with the Anglo-French bloc would provoke counter-measures by Germany.

The attempts to organise a military campaign against the USSR in the north were thus part of an overall anti-Soviet design by Britain and France. Their anti-Soviet projects in Northern Europe were coordinated with their strategy on the southern flank of the USSR and in the Balkans. A White Paper issued by the Swedish government in 1947 stated frankly that the dispatch of a contingent of Anglo-French troops was part of a general plan for attacking the Soviet Union and that "beginning March 15, this plan will be put into effect against Baku and still earlier through Finland".²

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945, Vol. 3, Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, p. 37.

² Public Record Office, Cab. 99/3, p. 12.

¹ Paul Reynaud, *Au coeur de la mêlée (1939-1945)*, Flammarion, Paris, 1951, p. 371; J.-H. Jauneaud, *De Verdun à Dien-Bien-Pou*, Les Éditions du Scorpion, Paris, 1960, pp. 133, 142.

² *Falsifiers of History. An Historical Document on the Origins of World War II*, Committee for Promotion of Peace, New York, 1948, p. 53.

NO CHANGE IN LONDON

Nothing fundamentally new took place in the relations between the USSR and Britain. There was a familiar pattern in the developments: London continued to parallel its overall anti-Soviet pressure with steps to get "insurance".

In a talk with the Soviet ambassador on March 18, 1940, Richard Butler said he hoped the end of the Soviet-Finnish armed conflict would be followed by an improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations. "He hinted quite transparently," the ambassador wrote, "that it would be expedient to return to the question of trade between the two countries, in particular to a settlement of the 'contraband' issue by some agreement."¹ The USSR responded quickly. On March 22, 1940, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs instructed the ambassador to tell the British side that "the Soviet government would be prepared to enter into trade talks if the British government stated it was indeed ready to positively resolve the question of Anglo-Soviet trade".²

The relevant statement was made to Lord Halifax by the Soviet ambassador on March 27, 1940. But Halifax tried to justify the inspection and detention of Soviet merchant ships by the British. The British Foreign Secretary argued that if a way was found to make sure that imports to the USSR were intended exclusively for the USSR itself the British government would willingly accommodate the Soviet government in the matter of the detention of freight and ships.³ This was direct evidence that the British government sought to interfere in the Soviet Union's internal affairs with unprecedented high-handedness. Symptomatically, a memorandum of April 4, 1940, drawn up by the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, went so far as to demand British posts on Soviet territory to inspect Soviet exports.⁴

Nevertheless, the Soviet government showed restraint, and on April 27, 1940, agreed to restore trade relations with Britain

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *A History of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, p. 161 (in Russian).

on the basis of reciprocity. This was ignored in London. In the British reply of May 8, 1940 there was nothing approaching concrete proposals for the development of trade with the USSR. Instead, the British side raised the question of the content of the trade agreements concluded between the USSR and Germany and of restrictions on Soviet deliveries to that country.

The situation thus remained unchanged: London displayed no desire for constructive talks with the USSR to facilitate a general improvement of the political atmosphere in relations between the two countries. It continued its efforts to prejudice Soviet interests in both minor and, much more so, major issues of these relations and in international problems.

A Soviet memorandum to the British government of May 20, 1940, stated that the Soviet government can not subordinate its trade policy to the military aims of a foreign country and that it would trade both with belligerent and neutral nations on the basis of full equality of the sides and of reciprocal commitments. "Some of the actions of the British government to reduce and restrict trade with the USSR (annulment of Soviet contracts for equipment), the detention of Soviet merchant ships with freight for the USSR, the British government's hostile attitude towards the USSR during the conflict between the USSR and Finland ... were not conducive to the satisfactory development of talks," TASS declared on May 22, 1940. Yet another opportunity for normalising Soviet-British trade and economic relations was thus lost on account of London's continued anti-Soviet course.

RELATIONS WITH FRANCE: DOWN TO ALMOST ZERO

The Soviet Union's relations with France were even worse than with Britain. French reactionaries were in fact steering towards a rupture. As before, blinded by their anti-Sovietism they did not see the imminent military menace. Characterising French policy during the period of the "phoney war", Charles de Gaulle wrote in his memoirs that in Paris "they were more preoccupied with how to strike at Russia—either by helping Finland, or bombing Baku, or landing in Istanbul—than with how to cope with

Germany".¹ In diaries for the period between 1939 and 1973 the well-known French diplomat Hervé Alphand realistically noted that the French war-time government doomed France to defeat in 1940 by, among other things, failing to have a powerful ally such as the Soviet Union. "It must be acknowledged," he wrote, "that for various reasons Sarraut, Blum, and Daladier adopted an inconsistent posture and neglected to conclude with the Russians a military agreement that would undoubtedly have delivered us from war."²

Instead of renouncing its anti-Sovietism and drawing closer to the USSR, the French government intensified its pressure on the USSR all along the line. For example, when nationalisation was started in the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, which had become part of the USSR, the chairman of the Seine Tribunal responded to a grievance lodged by the French Oil Producers' and Traders' Association and ordered, as early as December 28, 1939, the impounding of the bank accounts and property of the Soviet trade mission in France, amounting to some 1,000 million francs. On the next day the Soviet embassy protested strongly to the French Foreign Ministry, demanding the immediate cancellation of this decision, which was in violation of the status of the trade mission defined in the interim trade agreement of January 11, 1934.³

In keeping with the Soviet-French trade agreement in force in 1939, the Soviet Union was preparing to place in France contracts amounting to over nine million rubles. But the French side refused to prolong the trade agreement, and on March 15, 1940, denied most-favoured status to Soviet goods (with the exception of some kinds of oil products). It requisitioned the equipment and armaments manufactured under contracts with the Soviet Union and denied a licence for the export of some commodities to the USSR. As a result, the Soviet Union sustained considerable losses.

On February 5, 1940, the French police, acting in glaring violation of the law, raided the premises of the Soviet trade mis-

sion in Paris. About a hundred plain clothes men broke into the building, occupying and searching it, and confiscating documents. Members of the trade mission's staff were detained, taken to their homes under police guard, and released only after the search was completed. They were not allowed to enter the mission building. Moreover, police searched the Intourist offices and the former Soviet school in Paris. The Soviet embassy in France qualified the police raid as "an act of glaring hostility that applied only to enemy countries".

Soviet-French relations were on the whole frozen. In 1940 Soviet trade with France reduced by 90 per cent compared with the previous years and totalled only 4,300,000 rubles.¹

Even the former French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud, who bears direct responsibility for his country's defeat, had to admit in his memoirs that the ruling quarters in France had themselves rejected an alliance with the USSR and that France entered the war with Germany "without an alliance with Russia". This defeat, he wrote, "was the Waterloo of French diplomacy", and it was followed by the total defeat of the French army.²

The nazis were given enough time to prepare a decisive blow against the West, and it was delivered. The French army was crushed.

In desperation the French government approached the Soviet Union at the close of May 1940. On May 25 the French Minister for Air André Victor Laurent-Eynac tried to ascertain whether the Soviet government would sell military aircraft to France. For the talks in Moscow it was intended to send Pierre Cot,³ a prominent left-wing personality and an advocate of friendship with the USSR. The Soviet Union agreed to the talks. But with the assistance of the US ambassador to France William Bullitt the French reactionaries prevented Cot from going to Moscow.

Summing up the various aspects of the anti-Soviet line pursued by the Anglo-French coalition during the "phoney war", V. M. Molotov said at the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR that "all these hostile acts were undertaken by

¹ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, Vol. I, *L'appel. 1940-1942*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1954, p. 26.

² Hervé Alphand, *L'étonnement d'être*, Journal 1939-1973, Fayard, Paris, 1977, p. 112.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ Ibid.

² Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauvé l'Europe*, Vol. I, 1947, pp. 16, 23.

³ J. Bouvier, J. Gacon, *La vérité sur 1939*, Editions sociales, Paris, 1953, p. 244.

Britain and France in spite of the fact that the Soviet Union had hitherto not engaged in any unfriendly actions towards these countries... It is high time these gentlemen realised that the Soviet Union has never been and will never be an instrument of somebody else's policy, that the Soviet Union has always pursued and will always pursue its own policy regardless of whether the gentlemen in other countries like it or not."¹

SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN VICHY

France and Germany signed an armistice on June 22, 1940 at the railway junction of Rethondes in Compiègne. The bulk of the nation's industrial potential, including practically the entire iron-and-steel and coal industries, was in nazi-occupied Northern and Central France which accounted for two-thirds of the country's territory. These regions were also the nation's breadbasket. The Pétain regime, a dictatorship of the French reactionary bourgeoisie, settled in Vichy, a town in unoccupied Southern France. Germany regarded this regime chiefly as an instrument for plundering France with the hands of collaborationists. Under the armistice agreement France was to give Germany 40 per cent of the industrial output in the unoccupied zone, 50 per cent in the occupied zone, and 95 per cent in the so-called "forbidden zone", which was totally under the control of a German administration. For the upkeep of the nazi troops in France the Vichyites paid a daily sum of 400 million francs. But Berlin was planning more humiliations for France.

The Soviet government was well aware of what the Vichyites stood for. However, it was vital to get from Vichy more substantive information about the situation and about the government's political line, especially in view of the circumstances that it was deep in the nazi rear and its official stand was that of collaboration with nazi Germany. "What was going on in Vichy? What was the general situation in occupied France? What was the situation in workers' areas under German control? How great were the successes of the collaborationists and were their

¹ Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, March 29-April 4, 1940, pp. 28-29.

opponents stronger? What could be done to improve Franco-Soviet relations?

"The questions were many,"¹ wrote A. Y. Bogomolov, who was sent to Vichy in the capacity of charge d'affaires. The Soviet government wanted these answers.

In December 1940 the French authorities declared they wanted to restore trade relations with the USSR. In reply the Soviet side pointed out that it would first be necessary to remove the barriers that had been erected: the impounded property of the Soviet trade mission had to be released, three tons of gold belonging to the Soviet Baltic republics had to be returned to the State Bank of the USSR, and so on. Once these barriers were removed the Soviet government was prepared to help France with food and fuel. However, the question of resuming trade was protracted. The Soviet embassy ascertained the reason. It was that the Pétain government was worried about the internal political aspects of this step. "Rumours of the possible resumption of trade relations with the Soviet Union seeped through to the French public, which viewed the matters rightly as fraternal Soviet support to the French working people. I learned after the war that the underground Communist press welcomed the news of a likely resumption of Franco-Soviet trade with great enthusiasm. As for the Nazis, they could not object officially because they were trading with the Soviet Union themselves, but they probably obstructed the negotiations through their agents in the Vichy business world and officialdom."²

By and large the relations between the USSR and the Pétain government were very limited, being reduced to contacts on minor economic issues. Nonetheless, on December 25, 1940, during a talk with the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. Y. Vyshinsky, the French ambassador in Moscow thanked the Soviet government for continuing to maintain normal relations with France.

France's defeat did not signify that there was now a submissive nation on the western flank of the Axis powers. The French Communist Party was the leading national force and the initia-

¹ A. Bogomolov, "Wartime Diplomatic Missions", *International Affairs*, No. 7, 1961, p. 72.

² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

tor of the Resistance that was beginning deep underground. On July 10, 1940, an underground issue of *L'Humanité* carried a manifesto, "To the People of France", signed by Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos. "A great nation like ours will never be a nation of slaves. . .," the manifesto said. ". . . The people are the great hope for national and social liberation. And it is only around the working class, ardent and generous, confident and courageous, that a front for the freedom, independence, and rejuvenation of France can be formed."¹

Soviet diplomats clearly saw the distinction between the French collaborationists and the true France. Bogomolov visited Paris at the close of 1940. "There was a striking difference between Paris and the comic-opera Vichy, with its incongruous 'national revolution', fascist clerical policy and wretched attempts to play a 'double game'. In Paris everything was clearer, and hence more tragic. The French people were not crushed. Jaques Duclos, Gabriel Péri, Benoît Frachon, Catelas, and many other fighters and leaders of the French proletariat were active somewhere underground. The fiery applies of Maurice Thorez reached Paris, inspiring those fine sons of the French people, who viewed the Nazis not only as conquerors but as bitter enemies of the working class."²

A. Z. Manfred, a prominent Soviet historian, wrote: "France took no part in the humiliating and shameful episode in Montoire, when a resigned, aging marshal shook the hand of the arrogant, triumphant Führer. The voice of France was heard in the underground calls and leaflets of the Communist Party, in the first shots fired by the franc-tireurs, in the call from London to free Frenchmen to continue the war against the German invaders."

"An eminent French writer, who never concealed his Catholicism and was unassociated with left-wing political forces—I mean François Mauriac—said: 'Only the working class as a whole remained faithful to France in her distress and humiliation.'³ In the hour of national trial, in the hour of confusion, and incredul-

ity of parties and leaders, who for long years had held the helm of state power, the working class and its vanguard—the Communist Party came forward as the nation's leading force, as the initiators of the Resistance movement that commenced deep underground."¹

4. SOVIET-BRITISH RELATIONS AFTER THE DEFEAT OF FRANCE

When the government of Winston Churchill came to power in Britain (May 10, 1940) the prerequisites appeared for a largely new situation in Soviet-British relations. There were indications in the attitude of the new government of a desire to correct the mistake of the Chamberlain "Munich" Cabinet, through whose fault no agreement was reached at the 1939 negotiations. The Churchill government did not share the illusions about coming to terms with Hitler to the extent its predecessors had counted on—nazi expansion had gone too far, Britain's existence was threatened, and Allied France had fallen. Realising that the war with Germany would be long and bitter, Churchill, a sworn enemy of communism, could not but understand that Britain needed the Soviet Union. This awareness opened up possibilities for improving Soviet-British relations.

FORCE OF INERTIA IN LONDON'S ACTIONS

Actually, however, the Churchill government paralleled its statements to the Soviet government about the need for "new relations" between the two countries with actions that were a clear throwback to the anti-Soviet policy of the Munichmen. Churchill and his associates continued to be influenced by that segment of the British ruling circles that were implacable in their hatred of the Soviet Union. The British leaders sometimes acted as though they were blind to the fact that in the course of the war Britain's international positions and potentialities deteriorated

¹ Maurice Thorez, *Fils du peuple*, Editions sociales, Paris, 1954, p. 179.

² A. Bogomolov, op. cit., p. 91.

³ Alexander Werth, *France, 1940-1955*, Robert Hale Ltd., London, 1956, p. 150.

¹ A. Z. Manfred, *Traditions of Friendship and Cooperation. From the History of Russo-French and Soviet-French Relations*, Moscow, 1967, p. 255 (in Russian).

immeasurably. The Churchill government did not renounce the attempts to put the USSR in a subordinate position, often trying to speak with it in the language of strength and seeking to use it in the interests of British imperialism. This duplicity in the British government's attitude towards the USSR remained the principal hindrance to the development of Soviet-British relations.

On May 20, 1940, Lord Halifax, who continued to hold the post of Foreign Secretary in the Churchill government, summoned the Soviet ambassador and informed him that the British government had decided urgently to send to Moscow a prominent political figure who could by means of personal talks with Soviet leaders ascertain on the spot the possibility of improving Anglo-Soviet relations generally and concluding a trade agreement in particular. If the Soviet government had no objections, the British government would like to send Sir Stafford Cripps to Moscow as its special representative.¹ The Soviet government agreed to Cripps' appointment as ambassador but considered it superfluous to give him a special status. On June 2, 1940, the Foreign Office informed the Soviet embassy in London that the British government had appointed Cripps ambassador without mention of any "special mission".² On June 12, Britain's new ambassador arrived in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, on May 23, 1940, Butler had informed the Soviet ambassador that the new government wanted to begin talks anew and on an entirely different plane. It was prepared to sign an agreement with the USSR on the basis of commodity exchange. On May 25, 1940, Hugh Dalton, the Minister for Economic Warfare, told I. M. Maisky that he regarded as absurd the stand of the former British government on the question of trade talks with the USSR. Previous memoranda must be considered null and void, and all negotiations must begin from the beginning. The new British government, Dalton said, seriously desired an improvement of relations with the USSR and decided to put an end to all sorts of notes and memoranda and act in a new way. Moreover, in token of the change of the general course it had decided to release the Soviet ships *Selenga* and

Mayakovsky and entered into talks on this matter with the French government in whose custody these ships were.¹

London's anxiety over the sharp deterioration of Britain's military-political positions gave way to alarm after France's defeat. There was correspondingly more interest on the part of the British in constructively promoting relations with the USSR. On June 25, 1940, Winston Churchill sent a personal message to the head of the Soviet government J. V. Stalin through the British ambassador Stafford Cripps. There had been no messages of this kind before. The Churchill message stated: "In the past—indeed in the recent past—our relations have . . . been hampered by mutual suspicions. . . . But since then a new factor has arisen which . . . makes it desirable that both our countries should re-establish our previous contact, so that if necessary we may be able to consult together as regards those affairs in Europe which must necessarily interest us both."² Churchill offered "to discuss fully with the Soviet government any of the vast problems created by Germany's present attempt to pursue in Europe a methodical process by successive stages of conquest and absorption".³

The Soviet government once again showed its readiness to approach relations with Britain constructively. Soviet-British trade talks, in which Britain was represented by Cripps, got under way in Moscow on June 15, 1940. They covered the military situation in Europe and the problems in the political and economic relations between Britain and the USSR.

It might have been expected that the Churchill government would finally reconsider the unrealistic policy Britain had been pursuing towards the USSR. However, in the summer of 1940 the British government embarked upon actions that created new obstacles to improving Soviet-British relations. It refused to recognise the reunification of the three Baltic republics with the USSR; it impounded gold belonging to the Baltic Soviet republics and held in British banks; it seized 24 Estonian and Latvian ships in British ports and put in a special camp the sailors

¹ Ibid.

² Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. II, *Their Finest Hour*, Cassel and Co. Ltd., London, 1949, p. 119.

³ Ibid., p. 120.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² Ibid.

who wanted to return home. The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR systematically protested against these unlawful actions.

The zigzags in British policy towards the USSR placed Stafford Cripps in a difficult position; he urged strengthening relations with the Soviet Union. "It seemed to him," writes the British historian Eric Estorick, "that every step he made in Moscow to create better relations with the Soviet Government was followed promptly by some stupid counteraction on the part of the Government at home... He thought the British Government had played straight into the hands of the Germans."¹

Time passed, but through London's fault there was no fundamental change in the state of Soviet-British relations. Meanwhile, it was becoming crucial for Britain's rulers to abandon their former principles. In a telegram to London dated October 13, 1940, Cripps put forward some realistic considerations. He suggested certain change in Britain's anti-Soviet stand on the grounds, above all, that in the long run the Soviet government did not want Germany to win and hoped that it would be possible to contain the German threat by agreement with the Axis powers until the USSR was strong enough to cope with and defeat them. Cripps noted that it was futile to expect, while making no constructive proposals to the USSR, that the Soviet government would take risk of quarreling with the Axis powers and Japan.

The British government practically dismissed all of Cripps' suggestions. Moreover, it engaged in a major provocation against the USSR. On October 22, 1940, Stafford Cripps called on the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. Y. Vyshinsky and, on behalf of the British government, proposed the signing of a trade agreement with Britain to be followed by a non-aggression pact similar to the one concluded with Germany. The British ambassador stressed that this proposal was confidential.² However, in early November, the British Foreign Office leaked the content of these proposals just before the head of the Soviet government was to visit Berlin.

¹ Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps: Master Statesman*, The John Day Company, New York, 1949, p. 239.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Meeting with Cripps on November 11, 1940, Vyshinsky gave a negative assessment to the British proposals. On November 19 Vyshinsky stated that, according to information from the Soviet embassy in London, "the source of the rumours is the Foreign Office, whose officials have been over the past few days telling various journalists about the Cripps offer of October 22".¹

On November 17, 1940, the US ambassador to the USSR Laurence Steinhardt reported to the US Secretary of State that "in his anger at the position in which he has been placed, the Ambassador (Cripps.-P.S.) intimated that he was suspicious of 'sabotage' in the British Foreign Office, saying that there were individuals in the British government who were so hostile to the Soviet Union that they would prefer to risk the Empire rather than permit a *rapprochement* to take place".²

This and other actions of the Churchill government clearly indicated that the British government was still aiming not to improve relations with the Soviet Union but to aggravate the relations between the USSR and Germany in the hope of hastening a conflict between them. This was borne out also by the stepping up of London's anti-Soviet activity on international issues affecting the security of the USSR.

COMPLICATED ROAD TO REALISM IN CHURCHILL'S POLICIES

The Soviet ambassador had his first meeting with the new British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden³ on December 27, 1940. London was beginning another round of pseudo-constructive approaches to relations with the USSR.

Eden said he believed there were no irreconcilable contradictions between Britain and the USSR and that good relations between the two countries were quite possible. He promised to make every effort to establish such relations. The Soviet ambassador noted that if Eden really wanted to promote the improvement of Soviet-British relations steps should be taken, in par-

¹ Ibid.

² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. I, p. 629.

³ Anthony Eden took over from Lord Halifax as Foreign Secretary on December 10, 1940.

ticular, to clear the atmosphere over the Baltic issue. On January 3, 1941, Richard Butler said that Eden was considering the best approach to improving Anglo-Soviet relations. He then intimated that the British government would prefer to pass over the Baltic issue and get the question of a trade agreement off the ground; if this proved to be impossible it would want a trade agreement in exchange for ending the Baltic issue.¹

This was another British attempt to square incompatible problems. The USSR responded correspondingly. On February 1, 1941, V. M. Molotov received Cripps, telling him that the Soviet government's expectation that relations with Britain would improve had not been justified. On the contrary, while the USSR had taken no hostile actions against Britain, London had resorted to a series of unfriendly acts towards the USSR in 1940, which testified to the British government's unwillingness to improve relations between the two countries. Molotov cited the Baltic republics issue (gold, ships, and so forth) as an example.² This was the official Soviet reply to the British government's proposals.

On February 24, 1941, Cripps informed Vyshinsky that he had been instructed to meet with Eden in Istanbul on February 28. In this connection, on his own initiative, he wished to know Stalin's opinion on whether it would be desirable and possible for the latter to meet with Eden to consider Anglo-Soviet relations.³ On the next day Vyshinsky told Cripps that the Soviet government felt that "the time has not yet come for resolving major problems by a meeting with Soviet leaders, especially since such a meeting has not been prepared politically".⁴

On April 18, 1941, the Soviet government received a noteworthy memorandum from Cripps. The ambassador wrote that in the event the war was protracted over a long period of time some quarters in Britain might like the idea of ending the war with Germany on German terms that would give the nazis unlimited scope for expansion eastward. This sort of idea, he pointed out, might have support in the USA as well.⁵ Cripps thereby sugges-

tively hinted that there could be another anti-Soviet collusion by world imperialism.

There were, of course, grounds for believing this hint. The basis for a deal with the nazis at the USSR's expense had been laid by long years of connivance with nazism and by the logic of the Munich conception. For example, on March 7, 1940, Lord Charles Roden Buxton, on behalf of a large number of members of the House of Lords, had sent Chamberlain a memorandum urging peace talks with nazi Germany with the argument that "Hitler is in a difficult position, especially in regard to Russia, and because of the conflicting views in Germany on the Russian question".¹ The British historian Ian Colvin writes: "There was an innuendo in many of these offers that a free hand (for Germany.—P.S.) against Russia in the East must be among the peace prizes."²

The Cripps memorandum was more than a warning that there might be another anti-Soviet plot by imperialism. The ambassador clearly tried to pressure the Soviet government, to compel it to renounce its policy of non-involvement in the war. It should be remembered, he concluded, that the government of Great Britain is not interested so directly in the preservation of the Soviet Union's inviolability as, for instance, in the preservation of the inviolability of France and some other West European nations. Cripps asked whether the Soviet government intended to improve its relations with Britain or wished to leave them as they were.

In reply Cripps was told that his "formulation of such questions was unaccountable and incorrect because it was the British, not the Soviet, government that had reduced our relations to their present state".³

At the close of March 1941 intelligence dispatches led the British government to the conclusion that nazi Germany was preparing to attack the USSR. In a letter to Stalin dated April 3 and forwarded by the British ambassador, Churchill wrote: "I have sure information from a trusted agent that when the Germans thought they had got Yugoslavia in the net—that is to say, after March 20—they began to move three out of the five

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

¹ Public Record Office, Premier, 1/443.

² *The Daily Telegraph*, January 1, 1971.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

panzer divisions from Romania to Southern Poland. The moment they heard of the Serbian revolution this movement was countermanded. Your Excellency will readily appreciate the significance of these facts."¹

Thus, British policy itself devalued even that London's information which was based on facts.

In *Codeword "Barbarossa"*, a work by the American researcher Barton Whaley, it is noted that the Soviet government was under no illusion about Germany's plans and it sought to keep the country out of the war until 1942 when "the Red Army would have rebuilt to the unassailable state".² Further, Whaley points out that information received from the capitalist countries about Germany's preparations for an invasion of the USSR was extremely contradictory. In fact, the torrent of misinformation was so heavy, Whaley writes, that even the government of Japan, Germany's strongest ally, regarded these preparations as nothing more than a "maneuver designed to camouflage an intention to invade England".³

But as the menace of fascism mounted the logic of events compelled the Churchill government to assess the situation realistically. Commenting on April 22, 1941, with regard to one of Cripps' telegrams received from Moscow, Churchill admitted: "They (the Soviet Government) know perfectly well their danger and also that we need their aid."⁴ Cripps informed London at the close of March 1941 that by its actions the Soviet government was showing as it were its "desire to prepare the ground for the possibility of a *rapprochement* with us".⁵ Speaking on behalf of Churchill on June 13, Anthony Eden told the Soviet ambassador that if war broke out between the USSR and Germany in the immediate future the British government would be prepared to extend every possible assistance to the USSR with

¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, *The Grand Alliance*, Cassel and Co. Ltd., London, 1950, p. 320.

² Barton Whaley, *Codeword "Barbarossa"*, the MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973, p. 226.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴ Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1962, p. 149.

⁵ W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, Vol. I, His Majesty's Stationery Office and Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1952, p. 656.

its air force units in the Middle East, send to the USSR a military mission, representing the three arms of the service to pass on their experience, and to promote economic cooperation with the USSR, via the Persian Gulf or Vladivostok.¹

It took the ruling quarters in Britain a long time to arrive at the decision that Winston Churchill enunciated in his radio speech in the evening of June 22, 1941. He declared that Britain would be on the side of the USSR in the Soviet-German war, for by helping the Soviet Union Britain would be saving itself.²

5. THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

"WHY DID ROOSEVELT NOT VENTURE TO BREAK OFF RELATIONS?..."

"In our relations with the United States of America," V. M. Molotov said at the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on March 29, 1940, "there has been over the recent period neither an improvement nor, I would say, a deterioration if we discount the so-called moral embargo against the USSR, an embargo that makes no sense, especially after the conclusion of peace between the USSR and Finland."³ Conveying this statement to the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull the Soviet ambassador in Washington K. A. Umansky noted: "We hold that the USA likewise pursues a policy of neutrality, but that the relations between the two biggest neutral powers, the USSR and the USA, leave much to be desired and suffer, in the first place, from the US government's discriminatory line in trade with the USSR... Although Hull promised nothing, he adopted a new tone and spoke for the first time of the possibility of improving relations."⁴

Soviet policy towards the USA in the initial period of the Second World War was based on a readiness to establish con-

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *The Times*, June 23, 1941.

³ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940*, p. 41.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

structive relations between the two countries. However, the Soviet government had to take into account the constant anti-communist slant of the policy actually pursued by the ruling quarters in the USA.

Throughout the initial period of the Second World War US diplomacy's attitude to relations with the USSR was in some respects similar to the line followed in London. The "constructive" attitudes towards the USSR on the part of Britain sprang from the calculation that Soviet-German relations would grow worse and were activated whenever Britain's position deteriorated in the face of the Nazi threat. Approximately the same motives prompted a similar course of the Americans. The distinction was that the US stand was influenced not only by the German factor but also by the policies of another aggressive imperialist power—Japan. But the "new" elements in it were reduced to unproductive general declarations.

In Washington they did everything they could to divert Japan from expansion in the sphere of the USA's imperialist interests and direct Japanese militarism against the USSR. However, they were well aware that the USSR was the major force in opposition to Japan in the Far East, and for that reason US diplomacy preferred not to take the relations with the USSR to the point of rupture. When the threat to US interests from Japan mounted there were approaches to the USSR in a "new tone". It is noteworthy that in the USA they felt that general declarations about a desirability of improving relations with the USSR were compatible with an anti-Soviet policy on major international issues and bilateral relations between the USSR and the USA, as well as in lesser matters, going, to quote the US Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, as far as resorting to a "policy of constantly kicking the Soviet government in the face".¹

When the USSR took steps to reinforce its security in the west in September 1939, the USA adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Nevertheless, in the USA there was a perceptible worsening of the general situation around Soviet-American relations. On

October 17, 1939, the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR V. P. Potemkin drew the attention of the US ambassador Laurence Steinhardt to "the growth of anti-Soviet feeling in the USA that is, in some cases, taking the form of direct actions against the USSR and its agencies in the USA". In reply Steinhardt said that this was the "first time" he was hearing of this and believed that it was the result "of the growth of general agitation caused by the war in Europe. Although it was hard for the US government to prevent irresponsible pronouncements by individuals",¹ nevertheless the necessary measures would be taken. But the situation remained unchanged.

Harold L. Ickes notes that the conflict with Finland had triggered a large-scale anti-Soviet campaign in the USA that was joined not only by the press but also by government quarters. All the attempts of Soviet representatives in the USA to explain the Soviet stand on this issue encountered the insuperable anti-Soviet barrier erected by the most conservative elements in the White House.²

On November 30, 1939, the US government offered to "mediate" between the USSR and Finland. This offer came at the time when the Soviet Union had exhausted all possible political and diplomatic means of removing tension in its relations with Finland. In this situation the US initiative was aimed at supporting the aggressive ambitions of the ruling quarters in Finland. The Soviet government rejected such "mediation".

The true measure of American "peaceableness" was the USA's military, economic, and financial aid to the Finnish militarists. At the same time, under the "moral embargo" announced by the US President on December 2, 1939, no American aircraft and spare parts to them, as well as aluminium, molybdenum, and aircraft equipment could be exported to the USSR. The embargo covered plant, patents, and other documentation for the production of high-octane petrol. There naturally was a sharp deterioration of Soviet-American relations as a result. During the second quarter of 1940, US exports to the Soviet Union dropped by nearly 50 per cent, compared with the previous quarter.

¹ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. III, *The Lowering Clouds*, 1939-1941, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1954, p. 436.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes*, Vol. III, pp. 134-35.

er. In May 1940 these exports went down to a record low—less than half a million dollars.

As early as December 1939 a resolution demanding a rupture with the USSR was submitted to the Congress on the claim that the terms of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the USA had been violated by the Soviet Union. This was so at variance with the facts that on January 18, 1940, Cordell Hull had to refute the charge. On February 8, in a letter to the Senate he wrote that the US government had no grounds for making a representation to the Soviet government of violations of any of the commitments assumed by the USSR in the agreements of November 16, 1933.

In February 1940, the US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles visited Rome, Berlin, London, and Paris. The Soviet Union was not included in his itinerary. In this connection the Soviet ambassador to the USA noted on March 3, 1940: "An early end to the war obviously does not enter into Roosevelt's calculations and would become an urgent issue only if Welles discover an opportunity to drive a wedge between us and Germans." In the view of the Soviet embassy, Welles's mission was to "find out how far the Germans were amenable to being used against the Soviet Union and, at the same time, to enable Roosevelt to win the image of a peace-maker before the presidential elections".² The British Permanent Under-Secretary of State Sir Alexander Cadogan subsequently wrote: "We had the distinct impression that Welles had in mind an outline for peace which would not require elimination of Herr Hitler's Nazi regime."³

Welles' mission was clearly linked to Roosevelt's public statement of February 9, 1940, about the USA's intention to go on helping Finland in the war against the USSR.⁴ The American diplomat Jay Moffat noted that Welles had come out for breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.⁵

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Daily Telegraph*, January 1, 1971.

⁴ *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 4, *War and Aid to Democracies*, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., New York, 1941, p. 79.

⁵ *The Moffat Papers. Selections from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pier-*

However, in Germany they were completing preparations for the invasion of Norway and Denmark and were therefore interested above all in frightening Britain and France. In accordance with their directives for the talks with Welles the German officials spoke mainly of Germany's determination "to end this war victoriously".¹

The Roosevelt administration's attitude to relations with the USSR in the early months of 1940 was thoroughly analysed by A. A. Gromyko in a letter to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. "Why did Roosevelt not venture to break off relations and why is the prospect of a break hardly probable both before the presidential elections of 1940 and after these elections if Roosevelt remains President? The question here is not in any special attitude on Roosevelt's part towards the USSR." The letter goes on to list the basic reasons compelling Roosevelt to abstain from a step like breaking off relations with the USSR.

"Although it hates the USSR implacably as a socialist country that is steadily growing stronger despite the enormous energy spent to set a number of countries against it, the American bourgeoisie knows that the Soviet Union will exist..."

"The Far Eastern problem. Although they are very bitter about the improvement of our relations with Japan, the US financial tycoons and the Roosevelt administration still hope that the USSR will remain a force in opposition to Japan in the Far East..."

"By breaking off relations with the USSR Roosevelt would seriously undermine his prestige as the president who established these relations. There is no doubt at all that this would reduce Roosevelt's chances for re-election in 1940, for the Republicans would have an extra trump in their hands in the election political game..."

"As regards the charges that the USSR is spreading communist ideology in the USA, encroaching on the US state system, and so on, they are all intended to befuddle the people and are used chiefly as a pretext for reaction to strike at all the progressive organisations in that country with, of course, the Communist Party of the USA as the main target..."

report Moffat. 1919-1943, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956, pp. 280-81.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D*, Vol. VIII, p. 819.

"Commercial interests are also of some significance. There are groups of the bourgeoisie who see the USSR as a fairly good market for their goods. A rupture of diplomatic relations would inevitably affect the trade relations between the two countries.

"The aforesaid, however, gives no grounds for drawing the conclusion that in the future reactionary elements will not seek a rupture of relations with the USSR."¹

ANTI-SOVIET BARRIERS TO THE NORMALISATION OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS

In the meantime, the developments in Europe did not favour the Anglo-French coalition. The fall of Belgium and France's imminent collapse worried the White House. In the Congress there was a growing body of opinion that the Soviet Union should be drawn to the side of the Anglo-French coalition. On June 2, 1940, Ickes noted in his diary: "Apparently ever since Churchill took over in England he has been attempting a *rapprochement* with Russia. When I get to see the President, one of the things that I want to suggest to him is that we might be able to help this *rapprochement* through diplomatic channels."²

Soviet-American trade and economic talks opened in Washington in April 1940. For the Soviet Union they were conducted by the Soviet ambassador to the USA K.A. Umansky and the counsellor of the Soviet embassy A. A. Gromyko. What the Soviet delegation insisted upon was that the USA should cease all discrimination against the USSR. Washington had to reckon with the firm stand of the Soviet Union. A note from the State Secretary Cordell Hull on July 1, 1940, said that the US administration was "prepared to cooperate with the Soviet Government in an endeavor to maintain between the United States and the Soviet Union commercial relations of as normal a nature as is possible in the present international situation".³

Nevertheless, the USA continued its hostile acts against the USSR, especially on the so-called Baltic issue.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. III, p. 192.

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1940*, Vol. III, 1955, pp. 323-24.

Earlier, on July 15, 1940, the US administration had frozen the assets in the USA of the Baltic republics and their citizens, prohibited any payments or operations involving these assets, and impounded gold bought previously by the State Bank of the USSR from Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian banks.

"Nothing good can be said" about Soviet-American relations was the description of their state in the Soviet government's report to the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 1, 1940.

The threat to the USA increased with the considerable strengthening of the Axis powers as a result of the defeat of France, the signing of the Tripartite Pact, Britain's difficult position, Hitler's expansionist designs with regard to South America, and, particularly, the further aggravation of American-Japanese contradictions. On September 28, 1940, after a conference of Roosevelt's "inner cabinet" Harold Ickes wrote: "It is incomprehensible to me that we should not make every effort to be on as friendly terms as possible with Russia... At a rate we are going, if England should fall, the United States won't have a friend in the world."¹

This feeling was articulated more and more often in political and public circles in the USA. For example, a bulletin issued by the influential American Foreign Policy Association in June 1940 pointed out that the United States was facing the prospect of finding itself in complete isolation from Europe and Asia. The Association urged *rapprochement* between the two most powerful neutral states—the USA and the USSR. The bulletin also revealed the anti-Japanese motives of this recommendation, saying that the USA's efforts to safeguard its interests should be complemented with the signing of a Soviet-American agreement obliging the signatories to support China's independence and to maintain the *status quo* in Southeast Asia.

On August 13, 1940, a number of leading newspapers in the USA published an article by Admiral Yates Stirling, which had a wide repercussion. Stirling wrote: "Our own relations with Moscow during many periods in the last twenty years have not been cordial. Yet, fundamentally, Russia and the United States should be friends. We need not approve Russia's form of govern-

¹ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. III, pp. 340-41.

ment but we should realize that in many respects our practical interests are parallel with those of the U.S.S.R.”¹

On July 27, 1940, the US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles said in a conversation with K. A. Umansky: “It is time our two countries thought not only of present relations but also of future months and years, which may be fraught with new dangers for the two powers. Is it not time to remove the causes of friction of which there are more than enough in the world, to end the bitterness in the relations between our countries?” Umansky replied that there were two conditions for eliminating this bitterness: “First, the cleansing of our relations of acts of discrimination and violations of the rights and interests of the USSR by US government agencies and, second, the relations between the USA and the USSR should be approached as relations between two great, politically and economically independent powers.”²

Evaluating this initiative by the US government, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR wrote to the Soviet ambassador in Washington on July 31, 1940: “Welles has unquestionably sought to understate to us the aggravation of American-Japanese relations and the intensifying struggle between the USA and Japan for supremacy in the Pacific. Moreover, Welles' statement was motivated by a desire, in connection with the commencement of the session of the Supreme Soviet, to smooth over the acrimony in the pronouncements made against us by US statesmen, notably by Welles himself.”³

On August 6, 1940, an understanding was reached between the USSR and the USA on prolonging for one year, until August 6, 1941, the American-Soviet trade agreement. This understanding was formalised by an exchange of letters between the People's Commissar for Foreign Trade of the USSR A. I. Mikoyan and the US charge d'affaires in Moscow Walter Thurston. Meanwhile, talks on Soviet-American economic relations were resumed in Washington. K. A. Umansky and A. A. Gromyko had a series of meetings with the US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles at the State Department.

¹ *The New York Times*, August 13, 1940.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

At the start of these talks, on August 7, 1940, Welles declared: “As in the past... there is not a single contradiction between the USSR and the USA, except over ideology, which, in the view of the US administration, should not hinder the normalisation and improvement of the relations between the two countries.”¹ Declarations made an impression, but in fact the USA abided by its hard-line stand.

On December 26, 1940, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov said to Steinhardt: “To this day the Soviet government has to go on asking the American government to annul some of the unfriendly or discriminatory economic and political measures taken against the USSR. To this day not even the American government's decisions such as ‘moral embargo’, for which there are no grounds whatever, have been cancelled.”²

However, a few things were achieved by the Soviet Union: “Agreement has been reached on the draft document for an exchange of notes on the import of gold; we have been given American tonnage, notably oil-carrying tonnage; the conditions have been improved for the work of our commission at the Wright Aeronautical Plant; the American government has stated its readiness to permit assemblymen and other American specialists to go to the USSR; in recent months there has been a virtual cessation of American nagging against our organisations and of incidents involving our citizens; a mail service has been established across the Pacific, which is something that has been denied to the Germans; Welles has made a number of public statements asserting that the talks are proceeding satisfactorily, and so on,” said a report of January 4, 1941, from the Soviet ambassador to the USA summing up five months of talks with Welles. But on all more important issues, the ambassador wrote, the talks either yielded inadequate results (the sale of equipment) or were being protracted (the “moral embargo”), or testified to the American government's continued hostility, especially over the question of recognising the Soviet Union's western frontiers. “The American government's tactics in these talks,” the report said, “were aimed at preventing an improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations, exploring the possibility for the deterioration of relations between

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

the USSR and Germany, and using trade to influence Soviet foreign policy."¹

On January 22, 1941, the US State Department announced that the "moral embargo" against the Soviet Union had been lifted. A letter from Sumner Welles to the Soviet ambassador said that the US government had decided that the policy enunciated in the President's statement to the press of December 2, 1939, and usually referred to as a "moral embargo" would no longer be applied to the USSR.² Nevertheless, the USA continued its discriminatory actions against the USSR even after the "moral embargo" had been lifted. For instance, in the period between January 1 and May 1941 the US government denied export licenses or held up freight worth 29 million dollars. Of the new contracts placed by Soviet organisations totalling 49,900,000 dollars, refusals were received for the sale of goods worth 38 million dollars. Unacceptable terms were often made for the contracts on the remaining sum.³ This line of action was continued until the last weeks before the Great Patriotic War.

The US government showed its hostility also in lesser matters, for example, in the attitude to Soviet organisations in the USA: obstacles were put to the delivery of mail to the Soviet embassy, Soviet newspapers and books ordered or subscribed to by Soviet organisations were destroyed, and so on.

The US embassy in Moscow contributed to Washington's hard line towards the Soviet Union. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt wrote to the Secretary of State on June 17, 1941: "I am wholeheartedly in accord with the line of policy which the Department has decided to adopt in its relations with the Soviet Union... If the policy which the Department has now laid down is strictly adhered to without deviation, the prestige of the United States will be enhanced."⁴

The USA's anti-Soviet actions remained the main factor inhibiting a positive development of the relations between the two countries. These actions devaluated Washington's declarations about desiring an improvement of political relations with Moscow. It was quite obvious that the US leadership was not pre-

pared for rapprochement with the USSR in spite of the mounting threat from fascism. After a talk with the Soviet ambassador on February 16, 1941, Harold Ickes noted: "Neither England nor we have played a good hand so far as Russia is concerned since Hitler began to run amuck and even now, when the immediate future is so very critical, we are making no real effort to come to some understanding with Russia. Oumansky is very frank in his criticism of our foreign policy so far as his country is concerned and on the facts I suspect that he is not without justification."¹

What was American diplomacy's approach to the relations with the USSR towards the close of the initial period of the Second World War? Indicative in this respect is a State Department memorandum of June 21, 1941: "Reports which are coming in regarding the situation in Eastern Europe make it clear that we should not exclude the possibility of outbreak of war in the immediate future between Germany and the Soviet Union. In case war does take place we are of the opinion that our policy with regard to the Soviet Union, at least during the early stages of the conflict, should be as follows:

"(1) We should offer the Soviet Union no suggestions or advice unless the Soviet Union approaches us...

"(3) If the Soviet Government should approach us directly requesting assistance, we should so far as possible, without interfering in our aid to Great Britain and to victims of aggression or without seriously affecting our own efforts of preparedness, relax restrictions on exports to the Soviet Union, permitting it even to have such military supplies as it might need badly and which we could afford to spare...

"(5) We should steadfastly adhere to the line that the fact that the Soviet Union is fighting Germany does not mean that it is defending, struggling for, or adhering to, the principles in international relations which we are supporting.

"(6) We should make no promises in advance to the Soviet Union with regard to the assistance which we might render in case of a German-Soviet conflict, and we should take no commitment as to what our future policy towards the Soviet Union or

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941*, Vol. I, 1956, pp. 764-65.

¹ *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. III, p. 436.

Russia might be. In particular we should engage in no undertaking which might make it appear that we have not acted in good faith if later we should refuse to recognize a refugee Soviet government or cease to recognize the Soviet Ambassador in Washington as the diplomatic representative of Russia in case the Soviet Union should be defeated and the Soviet government should be obliged to leave the country."¹

Owing to this approach of the American side and its anti-Soviet actions, the tension in American-Soviet relations remained right up to the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union.

* * *

The Soviet Union's steadfast and vigorous actions were the principal factor that led to the breakdown of the anti-Soviet trends in the policies pursued by Britain, France, and the USA in the early period of the Second World War. The Anglo-French coalition paid a very high price for rejecting military and political cooperation with the USSR against fascism at the negotiations in the summer of 1939. France was crushed militarily and subordinated to nazi diktat; Britain found itself sorely pressed. International developments in 1939-1941 made it plain that the bourgeois states could not alone cope with the nazi military machine.

The failure of the conspiracy of the two imperialist groups for joint aggression against the USSR, the further aggravation of contradictions between them, and the forced realisation by the ruling quarters in Britain and the USA that the Munich policy had no prospect created prerequisites for the formation in the future of the anti-Hitler coalition and showed that the policy pursued by the USSR was correct. A particularly important circumstance was that in the extremely complex situation of the early period of the Second World War Soviet diplomacy was able to preserve restraint and prevent a drastic exacerbation of relations with its future allies in the anti-Hitler coalition despite their numerous attempts to damage the interests of the USSR.

Nazi Germany's adversaries in the West gradually realised that cooperation with the USSR in the struggle against fascism became vital to their existence.

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941*, Vol. I, pp. 766-67.

Chapter 4 IN THE SOUTHWEST AND THE BALKANS

In the initial period of the Second World War nazi Germany steadily stepped up its drive for supremacy in Southeastern Europe. What attracted the nazis most to this region was its proximity to the Soviet Union. Moreover, bearing in mind the lessons of the First World War, when the Anglo-French sea blockade deprived Germany of many traditional sources of raw materials, in Berlin they now sought to resolve the problem of raw materials and food largely at the expense of Southeastern Europe. By 1938 Germany had stepped into first place in the foreign trade of the countries of this region, followed by Italy. A report issued by the Central European Economic Council (the German Chamber of Commerce) on September 9, 1939, urged the "total restructuring" of the economy of the countries of Southeastern Europe with the purpose of meeting the Third Reich's requirements.¹

Nazi expansion in Southeastern Europe developed in a fierce struggle with Britain and France, which endeavoured to restore their positions in this region (positions which had been undermined by the Munich policy of "appeasing" German fascism), prevent Germany from using the military-economic resources of the countries of this region, and bring them into their military orbit. In particular, Britain tried to hinder the supply of Romanian oil to Germany. In 1939-1940 France pressed for military-

¹ *Südosteuropa als wirtschaftlicher Ergänzungsraum für Deutschland. Gutachten des Mitteleuropäischen Wirtschaftstages. August-Dezember 1939 (Für Dienstgebrauch)*, Berlin, 1940, p. 160.

political and trade agreements with Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. In Paris and London they hoped to form a "Balkan bloc" under their aegis.

General Maurice Gamelin writes in his memoirs that the Anglo-French Command was set on enticing "Germany into undertaking operations in the Balkans instead of concentrating its efforts against France"¹ To this end there were a minimum and a maximum plans: the first provided for landing an Anglo-French task force at Salonika; the second envisaged sending British and French infantry, combat aircraft, and naval units to the Balkans. Moreover, it was presumed that these would be joined by units of France's allies—Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey—to bring the combined force up to 110 divisions. Of course, concedes Gamelin, the burden of the war would fall on other peoples. "We could have brought new forces into the game on our side... We would have gained time."² Enlarging upon the "Balkans bridgehead" idea to Anthony Eden in a letter of March 28, 1941, Churchill frankly spoke of the anti-Soviet thrust of this plan, namely, to make German expansion in the British sphere of interests difficult and create additional incentives for the Nazi leadership to move earlier against the USSR. "It is not impossible," he wrote, "that if a united front were formed in the Balkan peninsula Germany might think it better business to take it out of Russia."³

In its efforts to reinforce security along the Soviet Union's southwestern frontiers and in the Balkans Soviet diplomacy had to combine a rebuff to Germany's and also Italy's expansionist ambitions with opposition to the anti-Soviet policy pursued by Britain and France in these regions.

1. TROUBLESOME RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA

The policy pursued by Romania's monarchy created complicated problems for the USSR in the southwest. Romania stood

¹ Général Gamelin, *Servir*, Vol. III, *La guerre (septembre 1939-19 mai 1940)*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1947, p. 110.

² *Ibid.*

³ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, *The Grand Alliance*, Cassell and Co. Ltd., London, 1950, p. 151.

out among the other states bordering on the USSR for its hostility towards the Soviet Union. The most vivid manifestation of its anti-Soviet policy, which blocked the possibility of seriously improving Soviet-Romanian relations, was Romania's determination to cling to territories it had unlawfully seized from the USSR. These were Bessarabia and also Northern Bukovina, the population of which had declared for incorporation in the Soviet state as early as 1918. Moreover, the ruling quarters in Romania were always prepared to join in any anti-Soviet combinations of imperialist powers.

CAPTIVE TO ANTI-SOVIETISM

Bourgeois historians attribute Romania's anti-Soviet activities in the early period of the Second World War mostly to fear of "aggression" by the Soviet Union, to the "fear" of the Romanian leaders that Romania would share the "plight" of bourgeois Poland, from which the USSR had allegedly "seized" the eastern regions in September 1939. As a matter of fact, there were similarities in the position of Romania and Poland (before its defeat), but not in the context presented by bourgeois historians. Both countries held Soviet territories, the possession of which came to them against the will of the Soviet state at a time of its military weakness. Both countries clung to these territories and obstructed the restoration of justice in every way. What in the West is termed as "fear" of "Soviet aggression" by the Romanian rulers was in fact the fear of a thief in possession of what belonged to somebody else.

Back in December 1917, taking advantage of the trials being experienced at the time by the young Soviet Republic, boyar-ruled Romania sent an occupation force into Bessarabia. Strong protests from the Soviet Republic against this encroachment on its territorial integrity compelled Romania to retreat, to sign on March 5-9, 1918, a Soviet-Romanian agreement under which Romania relinquished its claims to Bessarabia. The agreement clearly recorded Romania's pledge that it would pull its troops out of Bessarabia in the course of two months and refrain from engaging in or supporting any military, unfriendly or other similar actions against the Soviet Republic.

But a month later, on April 9, 1918, the government of Alexandru Averescu announced the annexation of Bessarabia. Brit-

ain, France, Italy, and Japan were accomplices in this action, signing with Romania a protocol on Bessarabia's incorporation in Romania and recognising this annexation as "lawful". This protocol was signed without the participation of the Soviet government and against its will and the will of the Bessarabian population. Another arbitrary act was the Romanian military occupation of the northern part of Bukovina, inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, despite the fact that the People's Assembly of Northern Bukovina had declared for that territory's incorporation in the Soviet Ukraine.

The seizure of Bessarabia fueled the aggressive ambitions of Romania's rulers, making them highly interested in all sorts of anti-Soviet "crusades". In Bucharest they held that the destruction or fragmentation of the USSR would enable them not only to retain the seized territories in perpetuity but also to acquire new territories and thus create a "Greater Romania" at the expense of the USSR. Like Poland, Romania was used as a springboard of imperialist anti-Soviet policy and was one of the links in the "cordon sanitaire" against the USSR. This policy of the Romanian leaders was in conflict with the interests of the Romanian people, who saw the Soviet Union as a true friend.

Throughout the period between the two world wars the Soviet Union did not recognise the annexation of Bessarabia. The Soviet government demanded a just settlement of the Bessarabian question, in particular, in a note to the governments of Britain, France, Italy, and Romania of November 1, 1918. When the protocol on bringing the Briand-Kellog pact into force ahead of schedule was signed in Moscow, on February 9, 1929, the Soviet government also declared that in Soviet-Romanian relations there were outstanding issues. In his report to the 16th Congress of the CPSU the General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee J. V. Stalin said: "They talk about international law, about international commitments. But on the basis of what international law have the 'allied' gentlemen taken Bessarabia from the USSR and gave it into the bondage of the Romanian boyars?... If this is called international law and international commitment, what is called robbery then."¹

¹ 16th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), June 26-July 13, 1930. *Verbatim Report*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1930, p. 51 (in Russian).

The Romanian government did everything it could to contribute to wrecking the Anglo-French-Soviet talks in 1939. In April 1939 the Romanian Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu told British politicians that Romania would not join a "universal assistance system relying on Russia" for this would compromise Romania's relations with Germany.¹ In a conversation with the Turkish President Ismet İnönü on August 11, 1939, King Carol II of Romania declared that Romania would not permit the Russian army to enter its territory even to go to the assistance of an embattled Romanian army. He was emphatically opposed to signing a pact on mutual assistance with the USSR.²

A communique published in Bucharest on September 4, 1939, stated that in view of the war that had broken out Romania was determined to maintain a peace stand to which it has adhered hitherto, working to secure concord with all neighbouring countries.³ However, shortly before this, on August 27, 1939, Gafencu had assured the German envoy in Bucharest Wilhelm Fabricius that Romania would supply Germany with oil, raw materials, and farm products.

Romania's rulers intended to join in the world armed conflict only when there was no doubt about its outcome. For that reason, while drawing closer to the Axis powers, bourgeois-landowner Romania continued its balancing act, preserving its links with Britain and France. The fascist dictator Ion Antonescu later described Romanian monarchy's foreign policy as a "game at two tables". This policy gave the Romanian leaders the possibility of choosing the moment for finally siding with the strongest imperialist group.

In early April 1939 London and Paris gave Bucharest unilateral guarantees. Before the outbreak of the war the Romanian government had agreed to the transit of British military supplies to Poland and promised a base for storing them and assembling aircraft. The Anglo-French imperialists had several plans for helping Poland with troops via Romania. According to German intelligence, the Romanian government entered into negotiations

¹ N. I. Lebedev, *The Downfall of Fascism in Romania*, Moscow, 1976, p. 230 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VII, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1956, p. 363.

with Britain in September 1939 on the landing of British and French troops in Romania.¹ But impressed by the nazis' successful offensive in Poland, which was left to the mercy of fate by its Western allies, the Romanian government seriously doubted the value of the Anglo-French guarantees, although it had no intention of renouncing its political ties with Britain and France. "It may be said that towards the close of 1939 Britain and France had to some extent paralysed German influence in Romania and consolidated their own influence,"² the Soviet embassy in Bucharest reported.

However, the further prospects for Romania's foreign policy manoeuvres were determined mainly by the stand adopted in Berlin where it was held that owing to the key position occupied by Romania in the Balkans, Germany's relationship to "the other Balkan countries, Italy and especially Soviet Russia is affected by it in the most decisive manner".³ In early March 1939, Helmut Wohlthat, rapporteur of the Reich Ministry of Economics, suggested that Romania should cease building up its own industry and concentrate on agriculture. The ruling quarters in Romania were prepared for this, and an economic agreement was signed with Germany. Romania was thus on the way to becoming an agrarian appendage of nazi Germany.

The anti-Soviet character of Romanian foreign policy became more pronounced after the Red Army liberated the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia in September 1939. On September 21, Grigore Gafencu made the following statement to the Italian envoy in Bucharest Pellegrino Ghigi: "Poland and Romania have hitherto been performing the function of a barrier against Bolshevism. Romania cannot go on performing that function singlehanded"⁴ Concurrently, Romanian diplomacy stepped up its efforts to secure the support of nazi Germany. As the Italian envoy in Bucharest reported to Rome on September 25, the German representatives were confident that the "situation was

favourable to them. Peaceful collaboration with Romania is, in the present circumstances, much more convenient to Germany than, possibly, even its effortless conquest."¹

The Soviet government's decision to repulse the provocations of the Finnish military triggered an outburst of anti-Sovietism in Bucharest. Romania began ascertaining the dimension of the assistance it could get from Britain, France, Germany, and Italy if they began a "crusade" against the USSR, and demanded confirmation of the British and French guarantees in the event of a Romanian-Soviet war.

Britain's official reply about the guarantees was received by Romania on December 14, 1939. The British envoy in Bucharest Reginald Hoare told the Romanian government that Britain and France would extend their guarantees to Romania's eastern frontiers only if Turkey should immediately go to the aid of Romania, and if no opposition were to be feared on the part of Italy.² France, for its part, declared that Turkey's stand would decide whether Romania would get British and French assistance in the event of a war with the USSR.

Although Britain and France were prepared to encourage the anti-Soviet slant in Romania's policies, these imperialist states did not feel they should join in the planned adventure of the Romanian rulers on any terms. They sought to create a more convenient situation for aggression against the USSR. At that particular moment they counted chiefly on a spread of the Soviet-Finnish conflict. Moreover, their own interests in the war against the German group required safe southern flanks, while the attitudes of Italy and Turkey at the close of 1939 were not reliable enough for the actions Bucharest was hastening.

Nevertheless, in combination with Germany's course, aggressive hostile actions by Britain and France towards the USSR encouraged militarist ambitions among Romania's leaders and gave them unfounded hopes. In Bucharest the crown used virtually every opportunity to demonstratively accentuate its claims to Soviet territories. In the period between September 1939 and the end of June 1940, i.e., until the "Bessarabian question" was actually settled, most of the members of the Romanian gov-

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. VIII, 1954, p. 5*; P. E. Flandin, *Politique française, 1919-1940*, Paris, Les Editions nouvelles, 1947, p. 317.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. XI, 1960, p. 281.*

⁴ *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, Nona serie: 1939-1943, Vol. I, la Libreria dello Stato, Rome, 1954, p. 226.*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

² Grigore Gafencu, *Prelude to the Russian Campaign*, Frederick Müller Ltd., London, 1945, pp. 274, 276.

ernment visited Bessarabia singly and together. Each tour was given an anti-Soviet edge. In its foreign policy Romania intensified its search for anti-Soviet alliances, playing not only at the "two tables" of the imperialist groups but also at all other "tables" where a political game was in progress to the detriment of the USSR's interests. Romania actively built up its armaments and did not conceal the "Eastern" orientation of its military policy. Lastly, propaganda campaigns of a sharply anti-Soviet character went on continuously throughout the country.

The Soviet embassy in Romania summed up Bucharest's political activities during the first months of the Second World War: "At the close of 1939 and the beginning of 1940 Romania was active in the anti-Soviet preparations for a meeting of the Council of the Balkan Entente. The Romanian government was the principal conduit of the anti-Soviet combinations of Britain and France. It set great hopes on a military campaign against the Soviet Union when the war with Finland broke out."¹

The Romanian press systematically urged an attack on the USSR. The militarist mood in Bucharest could not pass unnoticed either. The Soviet embassy reported on January 5, 1940: "Troops continue to be massed in Bessarabia and Bukovina." According to rumours emanating from local military circles, the Romanians were planning to concentrate some 20 divisions against the USSR.² In a radio broadcast on March 18, 1940, George Tatarescu declared: "The iron and stone belts along our frontiers must be completed, and in connection with the nation's armament this question must be resolved without delay."³ In the spring of 1940 the Romanian government demonstratively mobilised the army, calling up more than a million reservists. At the same time it requested Germany's assistance in building an "eastern rampart" along the Dniester under the guise of a railway project. Romania's military expenditures, which amounted to 3,600 million lei in 1936, had grown 4.5-fold by 1940.⁴

Romania's militarisation aggravated the economic difficulties the nation was already experiencing. In February 1940 the Soviet embassy in Bucharest noted: "On account of the continued

mobilisation the condition of the proletarian sections of the population is daily deteriorating. The concentration of new contingents has not been officially announced, but people receive individual call-up papers obliging them to report immediately to their units."¹

The army's accelerated armament, the country's militarisation, and the anti-Soviet hysteria were evidence of the growth of adventurist feeling among Romania's rulers and led to a further rise of tension on the southwestern frontiers of the Soviet Union.

LEANING TOWARDS GERMANY

The fact that Romania was leaning towards Germany enabled the latter basically to resolve one of its most crucial military-economic problems—that of oil. Under an agreement signed with Romania in September 1939, Berlin got the Romanians to supply 1,200,000 tons of oil annually. In March 1940 Romania pledged itself to increase these supplies to 2,400,000 tons annually. In this connection Ribbentrop said that these pledges "turned out entirely satisfactorily and fully safeguard our vital interests in deliveries of petroleum".² Then, at the end of March 1940, Romania's leaders took an even bigger step towards satisfying Berlin's military-economic appetite: the Romanian Prime Minister George Tatarescu promised to supply Germany with nearly 9,500,000 tons of oil annually.³

German military successes in Western Europe in the spring of 1940 served as a signal for whipping up anti-Soviet hysteria in Romania. Romania intensified its efforts to turn Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina into a springboard against the USSR. In January-March 1940 the Romanian military organised 26 provocations along the Soviet-Romanian demarcation line on the Dniester.⁴ Romanian aircraft intruded into Soviet air space. The fascist quarters in Romania openly came out against the USSR. The police in Bucharest unceremoniously detained staff members of the Soviet embassy. Romanian reaction intensified military-po-

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *A History of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, p. 145 (in Russian).

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 926.

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, 1956, p. 50.

⁴ *Essays on the History of the Communist Party of Moldavia*, Kishinev, 1968, p. 243 (in Russian).

lice terror against the population of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

The facts were that Romania's rulers were taking Romania ever deeper into servitude to the fascist states. In April 1940 Fabricius reported to Berlin that "the King, the Court Minister, the Minister President, Foreign Minister, and War Minister all hold fast to the line of policy... in alignment with Germany".¹ On May 28, 1940, Romania and Germany signed the so-called oil pact, under which Romania pledged itself to supply Germany with oil and oil products in exchange for a large quantity of arms from the war trophies captured by the nazis in Poland. These arms were "necessary to strengthen Romania's political position with respect to Russia", Tatarescu explained to the nazi envoy in Bucharest. In a conversation with Fabricius on May 28 Tatarescu sought to make it clear that Romania was prepared for practically total collaboration with Germany, stressing that he was speaking not of Romania's neutrality but of its orientation towards Germany.²

In Bucharest they continued to be preoccupied chiefly with the retention of the "eastern territories" seized from the USSR. At a conference on April 19, 1940, chaired by the Romanian king and attended by Tatarescu and Foreign Minister Gafencu it was decided to resist the Soviet Union if it should insist on a settlement of the "Bessarabian question". Tony Albord, the French military attache in Budapest who visited Bucharest on the instructions of General Maxime Weygand, wrote that the Romanian government had massed troops along the Dniester and subordinated the nation's economy to Germany.³

The speed with which Romania's rulers were drawing closer to Germany and the escalation of anti-Sovietism in Romania caused growing anxiety in Moscow. The Soviet government deemed it necessary to intensify its efforts to settle the "Bessarabian question". On March 29, 1940, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR declared: "...We have no non-aggression pact with Romania. The reason for this is the unresolved... question... of Bessarabia whose seizure by Romania the Soviet Union

has never recognised, although it has never raised the question of recovering Bessarabia by force of arms." This statement demolished the inventions of the imperialists that the Soviet Union was planning aggression against Romania in order to recover the territories that had been wrested from it. Molotov emphasised that "there were no grounds for any worsening... of Soviet-Romanian relations."⁴

It cannot be said that the activation by the Soviet Union of the question of Bessarabia, a territory that belonged to it by rights, was entirely unreflected in Bucharest's policy. The Soviet embassy in Romania noted that "the strengthening of the Soviet Union's international position and the fading of the hopes for active assistance from Britain in the event of an armed conflict with the Soviet Union have compelled the Romanian government to reconsider its attitude towards the USSR. There is talk about improving economic relations between the two countries... But it is quite obvious that the Romanian government wants a 'rap-prochement' without the settlement of outstanding political problems." When the Soviet ambassador met with the Foreign Minister Ion Gigurtu² on June 21, 1940, and the question of ways and means of improving relations between the USSR and Romania was brought up the Soviet ambassador noted that it was necessary above all to settle outstanding political issues, particularly the question of Bessarabia. Gigurtu evaded talking about this subject.³ As before, Romania was not prepared to reach a peaceful, just settlement of the "Bessarabian question".

On June 26 the nazi envoy Fabricius reported to Berlin that Carol II and the Romanian government had no intention of satisfying the Soviet demand for the return of Bessarabia, and that if this demand was made, they were determined to fight.⁴

A disquieting situation took shape along the Soviet-Romanian demarcation line. On April 20 the Romanian government replied to a memorandum of April 9, 1940, from V. M. Molotov about 15 frontier incidents. The reply offered totally unac-

¹ *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 40 (in Russian).

² Ion Gigurtu was Romania's Foreign Minister from June 2 to July 4, 1940.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

⁴ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. X, 1957, p. 19.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, pp. 61-62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49

³ Tony Albord, "Weygand devant le problème oriental (1939-1940)", *La Revue des deux mondes*, June 1965, pp. 333-34.

ceptable explanations: of the 15 incidents eight were denied altogether and counter-claims were made on five (one was not investigated). Romania admitted that it was to blame only in one case. From the moment the memorandum was sent there had been other frontier incidents, including firing at Soviet patrols.¹ In the period between April 20 and May 23, 1940, the Romanian military organised two or three frontier provocations every week.²

In foreign policy the Romanian leaders were by now unconditionally taking their cue from Germany. On May 16, 1940, Carol II told the German envoy that "Romania's future depended solely on Germany".³ On May 25, 1940, Gafencu went so far as to tell Fabricius that the king "was absolutely ready to cooperate" with Germany.⁴

From the aforesaid it will be seen how slanderous are the assertions of bourgeois historians that Romania had to look for assistance from the Axis powers against "Bolshevik pressure" and that having secured the return of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in June 1940 the Soviet Union pushed Romania into the embrace of the German Reich. The decision to take the cue from Germany up to an alliance with it had been taken, of course, before the "Bessarabian question" was settled politically. However, in May-June 1940, the Romanian ruling elite did not manage to formalise its final switch to the camp of the Axis powers: Berlin and Rome refused to give Romania "guarantees" as long as it did not satisfy the territorial claims of Horthy-ruled Hungary.

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF A TERRITORIAL QUESTION

On June 26, 1940, the government of the USSR declared its principled stand to the Romanian leaders through the Romanian envoy in Moscow Gheorghe Davidescu: "The Soviet Union never reconciled itself to the forcible seizure of Bessarabia, and

this has been publicly stated time and again by the government of the USSR.

"Now that the military weakness of the USSR is a thing of the past, and the present international situation demands the speediest settlement of outstanding issues inherited from the past in order finally to lay the foundations of a lasting peace between the countries, the Soviet Union considers that it is necessary and opportune in the interests of restoring justice to address, together with Romania, the immediate settlement of the question of returning Bessarabia to the Soviet Union." Further, the statement said: "The government of the USSR holds that the question of the return of Bessarabia is closely connected with the question of the transfer to the Soviet Union of that part of Bukovina where the overwhelming majority of the population is linked to the Soviet Ukraine by a common historical destiny, a common language and a common ethnic composition." The Soviet government invited the government of Romania to return Bessarabia and transfer Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union. It expressed the hope that the Romanian government "would accept this proposal of the USSR and thereby make it possible to settle the prolonged conflict between the USSR and Romania by peaceful means."¹

This proposal whipped up anti-Soviet hysteria among the ruling quarters in Romania. The Crown Council was convened, the sitting lasting all morning on June 27, 1940. As soon as the sitting was over Carol II asked the German envoy to convey to Hitler his request for guarantees of the Romanian frontiers and for sending a German military mission to Romania. Concurrently, the mobilisation of the Romanian army was ordered.²

The government of Romania did not give an explicit reply to the Soviet proposals. In Bucharest they intended to protract the settlement of the question of Bessarabia for a long time. To this end the Tatarescu government hypocritically declared on June 27 that it was prepared immediately, in the broadest sense, for a friendly discussion of all the Soviet proposals on the basis of

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, p. 349.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 435-36.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, pp. 515-16 (in Russian).

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. X, p. 36.

concord. At the same time it requested Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey to state their attitude to the Soviet stand.

These countries recommended that Bucharest should settle its conflict with the USSR by peaceful means. In Berlin, the principal capital for Bucharest, they were worried that they would otherwise lose Romania's oil without which Germany would be unable to fight a war against the USSR in the future. In a broader sense Nazi Germany was apprehensive that its massive effort to penetrate Romania and turn it into a bridgehead against the USSR would be disrupted. However, the Nazi representative in Bucharest Manfred von Killinger intimated unequivocally to the Romanian leaders that a "concession" to the Soviet Union in this question would be purely temporary.

Because the Romanian statement was, in effect, evidence of a reluctance to settle the "Bessarabian question", the Soviet government demanded a direct reply to its proposals for a peaceful settlement. On June 28 the Tatarescu government announced its acceptance of this proposal.

That same day troops of the southern army group under General of the Army G. K. Zhukov crossed the Dniester and entered Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. "Moldavian, Russian, and Ukrainian brothers," said an address of the Soviet Command to the population, "the great hour has come of your liberation from the yoke of the Romanian boyars, landowners, capitalists, and secret police. The stolen Soviet land, Bessarabia, is now being returned to the Motherland."¹ By nightfall of June 30 the entire territory had been cleared of the occupationists.

The Soviet frontiers were restored along the Prut and the Danube. Thus were foiled the designs of Romania's ruling elite, encouraged by imperialist states, to use Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, which occupy a territory of 51,000 square kilometres and had a population of nearly four millions, as a springboard in the war that was being planned against the Soviet Union. The Soviet frontiers were now more than 200 kilometres farther to

the west. This reinforced the security of vital centres in the southwest of the USSR.¹

Soviet power was restored and socialist reforms were carried out in the liberated territories. On August 2, 1940, the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law on the formation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and the incorporation in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic of the territory of Northern Bukovina and also the Khotin, Akkerman, and Izmail districts of Bessarabia in which the population was predominantly Ukrainian. This decision, passed just before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, was of immense significance to the USSR. "The restoration in 1940 of Soviet power in Bessarabia and its reunification with the Moldavian ASSR," said Leonid Brezhnev, "was an act of historical justice."²

TOWARDS WAR AGAINST THE USSR

The territorial issue no longer figured in the relations between the USSR and Romania. After Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were reunited with the USSR, a mixed Soviet-Romanian commission was set up to demarcate the boundary between the USSR and Romania and plot it on the map. The conditions were thus created for the establishment of good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

But bourgeois-landowner Romania had already linked its destiny with that of Nazi Germany. The first German units began arriving in Romania in September 1940. The Soviet embassy in Bucharest noted: "The arrival of German troops in Romania signifies Romania's final political and economic subordination to Germany and further German penetration in the Balkans. The gaining of the foothold by the Germans on the Black Sea and the building of air bases are a direct threat to the interests of the Soviet Union."³

The Antonescu military-fascist clique, that came to power in early September 1940, was guided in its foreign policy by un-

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, p. 371 (in Russian).

² Ibid.

³ L. I. Brezhnev, *Our Course: Peace and Socialism*, Part Seven, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1975 p. 57.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

disguised hatred of the Soviet Union. In November 1940 Antonescu went to Berlin where he signed a protocol on Romania's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact concluded between Germany, Italy, and Japan.

In a talk with Hitler on November 22, 1940, Antonescu repeatedly stressed that Romania would be prepared to "fight alongside the Axis Powers for the victory of civilization".¹ Meeting with Keitel on the next day, Antonescu informed him in detail of Romania's military preparations along the Soviet-Romanian frontier and, generally, of Romania's preparations in the event of a war against the USSR. Antonescu saw this war as an easy promenade; for the "Romanian blitzkrieg", he said, it would suffice to commit two motorised divisions, which would "without trouble" break through the front and advance in the direction of Kiev, etc. Without disclosing details about Germany's plans of aggression against the USSR, Keitel assured Antonescu that Germany would do everything to make Romania feel it had the backing of the German army.² Berlin highly appreciated the anti-Soviet zeal of Romania's rulers. Before leaving Germany, Antonescu had another meeting with Hitler, at which the latter said without mincing words that "Germany would stand up for her (Romania-*Ed.*) in every respect, in the political as well as the economic field. From now on the existence of the Rumanian State would be backed by the entire German Wehrmacht".³

The Soviet embassy in Bucharest pointed out that "the idea of turning Romania into an official protectorate has now been abandoned by the Germans exclusively for economic and tactical considerations (to avoid giving other Balkan countries a negative impression and thereby hampering Germany's subsequent plans). All the steps taken both in the military and economic spheres must be considered from the standpoint of an eventual war against the Soviet Union."⁴

In order to settle all problems peacefully the Soviet government showed restraint in the face of Romania's anti-Soviet ac-

tions. It managed, for example, to secure the repatriation up to December 16, 1940, of some 220,000 inhabitants of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina who had been living in various parts of Romania. An agreement was signed on the transfer to the Romanian national bank of the lei redeemed by the State Bank of the USSR in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.¹

However, the efforts of the Soviet government to normalise relations with Romania encountered growing resistance in Bucharest where they had lost all interest in this because they were expecting Germany to attack the Soviet Union. Trade and economic relations all but ceased between the USSR and Romania.

Bellicose anti-Soviet propaganda was started in Romania at the close of May 1941. In Bucharest war with the USSR was regarded as a means of considerable territorial aggrandizement. In a telegramme to his envoys in Berlin and Rome on May 10, 1941, Antonescu wrote that there had to be a "common frontier between Romania and Germany". He had his eye not only on Bessarabia and Bukovina, he explained.² Hitler and Antonescu had a meeting in Munich on June 11, 1941. At this meeting the Romanian side was informed of Germany's decision to attack the Soviet Union. Antonescu said in reply that he was prepared to place at the Führer's disposal for the war against the USSR all of Romania's military, political, and social resources.³ Hitler confirmed that Nazi Germany would not remain in debt: for its help Romania could "recover" Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and would be allowed to occupy other Soviet territories, right up to the Dnieper.⁴

Two days after Germany attacked the USSR Molotov had a meeting with the Romanian envoy Gafencu. Speaking on behalf of the Soviet government, he pointed out: "Following the settlement of the question of Bessarabia the Soviet government has no claims on Romania and its sole desire is to have good relations with it. The Soviet government told Germany that it con-

¹ Ibid.

² A. A. Shevyakov, *German Imperialism's Economic and Military-Political Aggression in Romania (1936-1941)*, Kishinev, 1963, p. 141 (in Russian).

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XII, 1962, p. 997.

⁴ *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. VII, International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 1947, p. 307.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, p. 665.

² Ibid., p. 687.

³ Ibid., p. 690.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

sidered the giving of the so-called guarantees to Romania to be a breach of good relations between the Soviet Union and Romania. Its understanding of these guarantees is that Romania was made dependent on Germany, that it was subordinated to the will of the German National-Socialists. The Soviet government regarded the entry of German troops into Romania as the occupation of Romania by German forces. We can now see that Romania has gone further along that path and is participating in the piratical attack on the Soviet Union. We have drawn all conclusions from this fact, although Romania has not ventured to declare war on the Soviet Union openly and say what it wants from the USSR. Romania is participating in the piratical war against the USSR, and our stand will stem from the fact."¹

The war against the Soviet Union marked the highest point in the betrayal of the interests of the people of Romania by that country's rulers.

2. THE USSR AND BULGARIA

In the early period of the Second World War the relations between the USSR and Bulgaria were determined by a number of circumstances. The Soviet government's point of departure was that between the USSR and Bulgaria there were less divisive elements than in the Soviet Union's relations with the other states along the USSR's European frontiers. While Finland, Romania, and Poland treated Soviet foreign policy with undisguised hostility, between the USSR and Bulgaria there was, in effect, no basis for serious inter-state contradictions. As perhaps in no other East European country, in Bulgaria there was a powerful socio-political trend in favour of rapprochement and friendship with the Soviet Union. Resting on historical tradition, this trend mirrored the sincere feeling of all progressive people in Bulgaria.

In the early period of the Second World War the government of Bulgaria adhered in principle to approximately the same foreign policy conception as the ruling quarters in some other states neighbouring on the USSR. In Sofia they tried to manoeuvre between the Anglo-French and German-Italian imperialist groups,

sharing their anti-Soviet aspirations. The pro-German leaning in Bulgaria heightened in proportion to the military successes of the nazis in Western Europe. However, in combination with the widespread sentiment of the Bulgarian people in favour of friendship with the Soviet Union, vigorous Soviet foreign policy prevented monarchist Sofia from breaking off relations with the USSR and compelled it to restrain its anti-Sovietism. All the same Bulgaria's rulers became increasingly inclined towards rapprochement with nazi Germany. Soviet diplomacy countered this trend as best it could.

THE USSR OFFERS GUARANTEES OF BULGARIAN SOVEREIGNTY

At an audience given by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR to the Bulgarian envoy A. Antonov on September 20, 1939, Molotov was asked whether in the event there was a need for it Bulgaria could count on Soviet assistance. "It can," Molotov replied, "but only on the basis of reciprocity."¹ The readiness to place the relations with Bulgaria on a basis of equality and mutual benefit up to assistance under difficult circumstances determined the USSR's approach to its relations with Bulgaria. A key element of this course was the offer of a treaty of mutual assistance made to Bulgaria in September 1939. This was also the direction of other Soviet initiatives in regard to Bulgaria. For example, in a directive of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to the Soviet ambassador in Sofia A. I. Lavrentyev of November 12, 1939, the latter was instructed to tell the Bulgarian government that "if the Bulgarians find themselves in any trouble they can count on the Soviet Union not abandoning them and that, if they so desired, the Soviet Union would be prepared to render them effective assistance".²

But the ruling quarters in Bulgaria showed no readiness to respond to the timely Soviet offers. This attitude aroused the indignation of the masses. The government received over 340,000 individual and collective messages from approximately 1,500,000 people demanding that it sign a pact of mutual assistance with

¹ *Soviet-Bulgarian Relations and Contacts. Documents and Other Materials*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 465 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

the USSR.¹ Progressive socio-political forces in that country were well aware that the safeguarding of Bulgaria's independence and sovereignty was linked inseparably with the establishment of friendly relations with the USSR. The feeling favouring friendship and cooperation with the USSR was shared by large segments of the people. This feeling was based on profound respect for the USSR and on the understanding that an improvement of the relations with the Soviet Union held out immense advantages for Bulgaria.

At the close of 1939 and the beginning of 1940 some headway was made in Soviet-Bulgarian relations. An air convention was signed on December 11, 1939. Until the beginning of 1940 Soviet-Bulgarian trade and economic relations were not based on treaties. The first Soviet-Bulgarian treaty on trade and navigation and also a trade and payment agreement for 1940 were signed on January 5 and came into force on February 5, 1940. Under the trade agreement the USSR was to import nearly 1,000 million leva worth of goods from Bulgaria; this amounted to more than 15 per cent of Bulgaria's trade turnover. Soviet supplies of scarce goods, especially oil and cotton, were of major significance to the Bulgarian economy.

The trade negotiations with the USSR coincided in time with the elections to Bulgaria's National Assembly in January 1940. It was the view of the Soviet embassy in Sofia that "the attitude towards the Soviet Union has now become, in Bulgaria, a key issue of the political struggle not only between the class parties but also between the various sections of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie fighting for power. In the election campaign both the government and opposition delegates urged closer, friendly relations with the USSR."²

However, having signed the trade agreement with the USSR, the Bulgarian government displayed no willingness to go further than economic links.

Bulgaria's economic dependence on Germany grew rapidly. On October 11, 1939, Bulgaria and Germany signed a number of secret economic and political agreements enabling Germany to import large quantities of food from Bulgaria on a clearing

basis. Towards the close of 1940 Bulgaria's debt to Germany had risen to 1,200 million leva.

The ruling elite's proneness to hamper the development of relations with the Soviet Union, to restrict them to the economic sphere, was motivated by its policy of anti-Soviet manoeuvring and also by the anti-Soviet activities of the imperialist states in Bulgaria. As the Soviet embassy in Sofia reported on March 28, 1940, "during the past month, March, there has been increased British and French pressure on Bulgaria in order to subordinate Bulgarian foreign policy to Anglo-French aspirations... Concurrently, according to available information, the British are threatening that if the Bulgarian government moves any closer to the Soviet Union the British government will denounce the credit agreement and have Bulgaria pay all its debts."¹

In another report to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs the Soviet embassy summed up its conclusions about the policy pursued by monarchist Sofia during the early months of 1940: "The Bulgarian government has stepped up its policy of balancing between the Anglo-French bloc and Germany... Fence-sitting now symbolises this policy... At present the Bulgarian government wants to maintain only economic relations."²

For Bulgaria's rulers the policy of balancing between the two imperialist coalitions was largely a cover for their pro-German sentiments which were not particularly publicised because they were still not very sure about the military-strategic situation in Europe. But in their contacts with Germany they made no secret of where their sympathies lay. In May 1940 the German representative Carl Clodius was assured by the Foreign Minister I. Popov, the War Minister G. Daskalov, the Finance Minister D. Bozhilov, and other Bulgarian leaders that Germany was Bulgaria's sole "natural" ally. "The general impression," Clodius reported, "is that the important political figures, above all the King, consider as the only possible foreign policy one of alignment with Germany."³ Monarchist Sofia constantly assured Axis representatives that it would ignore the Bulgarian working people's interest in the development of friendly relations with the USSR.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, p. 287.

¹ R. T. Ablova, *Cooperation Between the Soviet and Bulgarian Peoples in the War Against Fascism (1941-1945)*, Moscow, 1973, p. 40 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Starting from approximately September 1940, i.e., after Germany's military successes in Western Europe, the Bulgarian leaders began to speak openly of Bulgaria's readiness to collaborate with the Axis powers. Visits to Germany by Bulgarian leaders became more frequent in the latter half of 1940. Germany was visited by King Boris III, the Prime Minister B. Filov (twice), and the Ministers for foreign affairs, agriculture, trade, and industry. German special units began to arrive in Bulgaria in the guise of "tourists" as early as the spring of 1940. By the autumn of 1940 the number of such "tourists" had grown to 30,000. They were quartered in groups of 300-400 in the main towns. There were at least 1,000 German officers at Bulgarian war plants, the air force, motorised units, and anti-aircraft defence units.¹

The growing speed with which Bulgaria's rulers were drawing closer to nazi Germany in the spring and summer of 1940 increasingly came into conflict with the feeling of the working masses who, contrary to the ruling elite, wanted relations of friendship and mutual assistance with the USSR. Speaking to the Soviet ambassador on April 7, 1940, about this feeling of the Bulgarian people, Professor P. Stainov noted: "The sympathy of the entire Bulgarian people for the Soviet Union has never been greater. This stems not from sentimental reasons such as historical and blood kinship, but from reality. The Bulgarian people link with the Soviet Union their idea of freedom and material welfare. Today Bulgaria is all but a German colony. The Germans are determined to turn it into their colony completely and this is something the Bulgarian people do not want. The Bulgarian government does not definitively state its attitude towards the USSR because it fawns upon the palace and fears the people. The palace and the government elite do not want closer relations with the USSR for personal mercenary considerations, but they will not admit it because they are afraid of the people."² The Soviet ambassador was told about the Bulgarian army's sympathy for the USSR by the Bulgarian publicist Gankovsky on March 2, 1940: "A section of the officers feel that rapprochement with the Soviet Union is the single factor that will actually guarantee Bulgaria's independence."³

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

In the latter half of 1940 the movement for closer relations with the USSR, including the signing of a mutual assistance pact, assumed a mass scale. Leaflets and appeals were distributed in Sofia. Forty-eight members of the National Assembly signed a letter to the government demanding a mutual assistance pact with the USSR.¹ A group of Bulgarian intellectuals tried to hand an analogous statement to the Prime Minister Filov. In early November 1940 six workers' delegations from various districts of Sofia called on the National Assembly and a number of ministries to demand effective steps to improve relations with the USSR. Despite police harassment, slogans calling for a Soviet-Bulgarian mutual assistance pact were renewed almost daily on the building of the Ministry for the Interior.

SOVIET OPPOSITION TO GERMANY

In the autumn of 1940 the Soviet government intensified its efforts to stem the spread of nazi Germany's influence in Bulgaria and the Balkans as a whole. The General Secretary of the USSR People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs A. A. Sobolev was sent to Bulgaria on a special mission in November 1940. In a talk with King Boris III on November 25, 1940, he renewed, on behalf of the Soviet government, the proposal for a pact of friendship and mutual assistance with Bulgaria. This proposal was made also through the Bulgarian envoy in Moscow Ivan Stamenov.

For Bulgaria this pact would have been a guarantee of its independence. But the monarchist ruling elite was pushing the country in the opposite direction, completely ignoring the nation's interests. The wording of a rejection of the Soviet proposal was drafted with heavy pressure from a German military mission that was in Sofia at the time. On the day Sobolev arrived, a conference held by the king decided to reject the Soviet proposal.²

However, despite the Filov government's refusal to sign a treaty, the Soviet initiative was seen in the Balkan countries as a major action by the USSR in its struggle against the nazi threat in that part of Europe. For instance, as the Soviet embassy in

¹ *Ibid.*

² R.T. Ablova, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 38, 63-65.

Belgrade reported to Moscow, Yugoslav public opinion assessed the Soviet initiative as an important action in the Balkans in favour of peace, against German aggression.¹

Documents of the people's trial of Bulgarian monarcho-fascists indicate that as early as November 1940 Bulgaria's rulers were prepared to subscribe to the Tripartite Pact. On November 17, 1940, Boris III and the Foreign Minister Popov went to Berlin where they told the Germans that Bulgaria would adhere to the Tripartite Pact.² But out of fear of public indignation it was decided to keep this deal with Hitler secret. At the same time rumours were spread in monarchist Sofia to the effect that Bulgaria's policy had the approval of the USSR and that the Soviet government "did not object" to the presence of German troops in Bulgaria. On January 13, 1941, these falsehoods were refuted in a TASS statement.³

Moreover, on January 17, 1941, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR lodged a protest with the German ambassador von Schulenburg in connection with the massing of German troops in Romania for the purpose of entering and occupying Bulgaria and also occupying Greece and the Straits. This action, the protest said, could lead to turning Bulgaria into a theatre of hostilities.⁴

In a political survey of Bulgaria's foreign and domestic policy for 1941 the Soviet embassy wrote: "Prior to Bulgaria's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact the Bulgarian government maintained a more or less friendly attitude towards the USSR. It tried to give the impression that Bulgarian-Soviet relations were improving. This policy put the government in a stronger position in the country and enabled it to balance on the international scene. It established commercial relations with the Soviet Union, for this was to its advantage economically as well. It was slower to agree to an expansion of cultural relations and did all it could to avoid any political rapprochement with the USSR. It was ready to display friendliness towards the Soviet Union mostly

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² D. Sirkov, *Bulgaria's Foreign Policy, 1938-1941*, Sofia, 1979, pp. 262-65 (in Bulgarian).

³ *Pravda*, January 13, 1941.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

within the limits of protocol formalities that committed it to nothing."¹

As Bulgaria drew closer to Germany the Bulgarian government increasingly revealed the anti-Soviet edge of its policy. In February 1941, for example, it banned the showing of Soviet films. All Bulgarian-Soviet societies were closed after the arrival of German troops.²

The movement for a pact with the USSR and against Bulgaria joining the Nazi bloc was headed by the Bulgarian Workers' Party (Communists). The main aim before the nation was defined at the seventh plenary meeting of the party's Central Committee in January 1941 as the struggle to prevent Bulgaria from joining the fascist bloc and to ensure the signing of a pact with the USSR. From the autumn of 1940 to the summer of 1941 there were continuous actions in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Pleven, and other towns in support of a pact with the USSR and against an alliance with Germany.

The Bulgarian government hypocritically tried to get the USSR to believe that it was motivated by good faith. On February 28, 1941, the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry D. Shishmanov told the Soviet ambassador A. A. Lavrishchev: "The Ministerial Council has today decided to sign the agreement on Bulgaria's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact. The Bulgarian government believes that adhesion to that pact will not prevent it from maintaining and developing good relations with the USSR and neighbouring countries and requests that you assure the Soviet government of this."³ On the next day, March 1, the Chief of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry's Political Department I. Altynov handed Lavrishchev a statement with the information that the Bulgarian government had agreed to German troops entering Bulgaria.

The protocol on Bulgaria's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact was signed in Vienna on March 1, 1941. At the time this ceremony took place German troops were already entering Bulgaria. The monarcho-fascist clique in Bulgaria dissembled, declaring to the Soviet Union that the permission for German troops to

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Soviet-Bulgarian Relations and Contacts. Documents and Other Materials*, p. 545.

enter Bulgaria had been given in order to "preserve peace in the Balkans". The Soviet government categorically rejected this hypocritical argument, stating on March 3 that it was untenable and that such policy was "leading not to the strengthening of peace but to an extension of the war and to Bulgaria's involvement in it."¹ Two days earlier the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs had made it clear to the German ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Union was interested in the preservation of Bulgaria's independence.²

The Bulgarian people gave the Nazi troops a hostile reception with slogans such as "Germans, Get Out of Bulgaria!", "Down with Nazi Germany!", and "Long Live Free Bulgaria!" On March 6, 1940, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party (Communists) issued a Declaration denouncing the country's joining in the fascist bloc and saying that now that the country had been drawn into the fascist bloc and the fire of war was raging on Bulgaria's frontiers friendship and mutual assistance with the USSR was the only way to avert catastrophe.

Bulgaria's rulers thus turned away from friendship and mutual assistance with the USSR. Subsequently, in the indictment of the Chief People's Prosecutor of the People's Court of Bulgaria it was noted that "acceptance of the Soviet proposal in the international situation obtaining at the time would have gone a long way towards saving Bulgaria and the Balkan peninsula".³

However, even as late as the spring of 1941 the Bulgarian leaders were apprehensive of allowing relations with the USSR to deteriorate drastically. According to a report from the Soviet embassy on May 19, 1941, "anti-Soviet agitation is not popular among the Bulgarian people. Taking also foreign policy factors into account, the government officially declares that it wants good friendly relations with the Soviet Union. . . It needs this to enhance its prestige in international politics and also to reduce the gap between it and its people, for there is nothing that unofficial anti-Soviet propaganda can do to destroy the Bulgarian people's affection for the Soviet Union, an affection that has deep social, national, and historical roots."⁴

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 345.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ R.T. Ablova, op. cit., p. 37.

⁴ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

3. THE USSR AND HUNGARY

The Soviet Union wanted a positive development of its relations with Hungary. Between the two nations there were no major problems or mutual claims that could complicate the relations between them. In September 1939 the Soviet Union and Hungary resumed diplomatic relations that were severed in February 1939 after Hungary had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Soviet Union's decision to resume these relations was welcomed by the Hungarian people. The Soviet-Hungarian treaty on trade and navigation and also the trade and payment agreement signed in Moscow on September 3, 1940, after a visit to the USSR by a Hungarian trade delegation were extremely beneficial to Hungary. With the world war already flaming and Hungary's economic links with many countries sharply curtailed, trade economic agreements with the Soviet Union were vital to Hungarian industry.

The long years of intensive anti-Soviet propaganda by the Horthy regime and the brutal harassment of proponents of friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Hungary had not killed the Hungarian working people's deep sympathy for the first socialist country. After the world war broke out the Communist Party of Hungary, which functioned under extremely difficult conditions, continued its explanatory work, stressing that friendly relations with the USSR were a fundamental condition of genuine independence. On the initiative of the Communists legal publications printed a series of materials acquainting the working people with the CPSU's nationalities and social policies and with scientific and cultural life in the USSR. Soviet works of fiction were translated into the Hungarian language.

BELLICOSE MOOD OF THE HORTHY REGIME

The relations between the USSR and Hungary did not develop actively in the early period of the Second World War. This was mainly due to the anti-Soviet and anti-communist policies of the Horthy regime, to its lack of interest in strengthening ties with the Soviet Union.

It would have suited this regime more if there had been an anti-Soviet coalition of the two groups of imperialist powers, includ-

ing the USA. In a message to Hitler of November 3, 1939, the Hungarian Regent Miklós Horthy concentrated on the idea of a "crusade" against the USSR. He recalled with regret that in 1918 there had only been a half-hearted response to the proposal of the French Marshal Ferdinand Foch for an alliance against Soviet Russia and for a war against it by the combined forces of France, Britain, Italy, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. Horthy assured Hitler that whatever Hungary could spare was at his disposal.¹ Also indicative was Horthy's reaction to the news from Berlin that Germany had begun hostilities against the USSR: "I have waited for this day for 22 years. I am happy."²

Of course, in the Soviet Union a dim view was taken of Horthy's foreign policy programme with its underlying idea of creating a "Greater Hungary" through the inclusion of territories of neighbouring states formed after the First World War on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Horthy was eager to incorporate in Hungary the Transcarpathian Ukraine (then part of Czechoslovakia), the Yugoslav districts of Bačka and Banath, and also Transylvania, which belonged to Romania. These ambitions were a decisive element of the foreign policy pursued by the bourgeois-landowner oligarchy of Hungary.

Also, they underlay the military policy of the Horthy clique, which had placed a huge burden of war preparation on the country. In the period from mid-1938 to 1941 inclusive, Horthy Hungary's military expenditures totalled over 5,000 million pengös, which was in excess of the country's annual national income.³ Since Hungary's rulers did not have enough strength to impose their will on other peoples they went to all lengths to draw closer to the imperialist states that could help them. Combined with rabid anti-communism, this policy led Hungary into the orbit of Germany and Italy. At the same time Hungary's rulers did not abandon their hope of getting the support of the Axis' imperialist rivals.

The intertwining of the Hungarian rulers' anti-Sovietism, anti-communism, and revanchist plans was with particular clarity seen in a memorandum of General Henrik Werth, Chief of the

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 378.

² Quoted from A. I. Pushkash, *Hungary During the Second World War*, Moscow, 1966, p. 197 (in Russian).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Hungarian General Staff. Although this memorandum was written shortly before the attack on the USSR by Germany and its allies, its basic political provisions mirrored the attitude of the most bellicose section of the Horthy leadership towards the USSR throughout the initial period of the Second World War. "It is my firm belief," General Werth wrote, "that we should not remain idle during a German-Russian war. We should take part in this war:

"...for from the standpoint of our future our vital, national interests require a weakening of the Russian neighbour and his distancing from our frontiers;

"...for we are bound to this by our world view, which stems from the Christian-national idea, and by our anti-Bolshevik posture in the past and in the present;

"...for politically we have definitively linked ourselves to the Axis powers;

"...for on this depends the further extension of the territory of Hungary."¹

The hostility of the Horthy leadership towards the Soviet Union was such that as early as the first half of 1940 Hungary was regarded in Soviet military-political planning as a potential ally of nazi Germany in its contemplated aggression against the USSR.²

The Pál Teleki government made some attempts to balance between the two imperialist groups, but nothing came of them during the very first months of the war. This balancing was very relative, its essence being chiefly that a section of the Hungarian rulers led by the Prime Minister Count Teleki did not support the nazis as actively as the latter wished. In Budapest they counted on inducing Germany to give more consideration to Hungary, especially to its territorial claims, chiefly in Romania. Germany even had to demand assurances from the Hungarian leaders that they would not attack Romania. Towards the close of 1939, after angry shouts from Berlin, the Horthy government unconditionally reaffirmed that it would follow in Germany's wake. As was noted by Carl Clodius, the German representative at the

¹ *Hungary and the Second World War. Secret Diplomatic Documents of the Eve and the Period of the War*, Moscow, 1962, p. 254 (in Russian).

² A. M. Vasilevsky, *A Lifelong Cause*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 74.

Hungarian-German economic talks in the spring of 1940, the "authoritative political elements (Horthy, the Minister for the Economy Varga, the Chief of the General Staff Werth.—P.S.) are fully aware that Hungary's policy can only be conducted in close concert with that of Germany and Italy and that they are determined to act consistently with this in the economic field".¹

The USSR figured as a major factor in Hungarian foreign policy in the summer and autumn of 1940 when the Hungarian rulers attempted to achieve one of their central aims, that of annexing Transylvania. To secure Berlin's assistance, the Horthy regime claimed it was threatened by the USSR, although it had no grounds for saying so. For their part the nazis, who were encouraging rivalry and discord between Romania and Hungary, proceeded from the premise that an excessive exacerbation of Hungarian-Romanian relations and an armed conflict between them could draw the USSR deeper into Balkan developments and reinforce its positions. This prospect was entirely at variance with the calculations of the Axis powers. As a result of the so-called Vienna arbitration, on August 30, 1940, Germany and Italy decided to award Northern Transylvania to Hungary. German diplomacy got Romania to accept this verdict unconditionally intimidating it with the prospect of "Russian intervention". The same bogey was used time and again relative to the Hungarians. The main purpose of the "arbitration" was to tie Hungary and Romania closer to Germany with this additional means of bringing pressure to bear on both countries.

HUNGARY JOINS THE TRIPARTITE PACT

As part of its preparations for aggression against the USSR Germany escalated its activities in Hungary. On November 20, 1940, Hungary became the first Axis satellite to adhere to the Tripartite Pact. Nazi propaganda used this act for another slanderous campaign against the USSR, alleging that Hungary adhered to the pact "with the collaboration and full approval" of the USSR. There was an immediate response from the Soviet Union: on November 23 this falsehood was refuted in a TASS statement.²

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. IX, p. 258.*

² *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents, Vol. 4, p. 534.*

The Soviet Union strongly condemned Horthy Hungary's complicity in German aggression against Yugoslavia. A statement on the Soviet government's attitude to Hungary's attack on Yugoslavia, published on April 13, 1941, declared: "The Soviet government cannot condone this Hungarian action. A particularly adverse impression has been made on the Soviet government by the fact that Hungary started a war against Yugoslavia only four months after it had signed with that country a pact on lasting friendship."¹

Given all the willingness of the Horthy clique to serve Nazi Germany's interests, there were elements in the ruling quarters at Hungary who could see that the Nazi economic expansion and political diktat were gradually depriving Hungary of the status of a sovereign nation. Although the principal foundation of the policy of alliance with Berlin was not questioned by the Hungarian leadership, especially as far as anti-Sovietism and anti-communism were concerned, in Budapest the feeling did not entirely disappear that there should be a more circumspect approach to the Axis powers, that Hungary should save its strength for intervention in the war in a no-lose situation.

As regards the national feelings of the Hungarian people, genuine respect for their national dignity and revolutionary traditions was demonstrated by the Soviet Union. In a ceremony in Moscow on March 20, 1941, battle standards seized by troops of Nicholas I when the Hungarian national liberation movement was suppressed in 1849 were turned over to Hungary. This generous gesture, which earned the admiration of all Hungarian working people, acquired special political significance against the background of the undisguised Nazi diktat that had reduced Hungary to the status of a satellite.

The Horthy regime continued to deepen its collaboration with Germany against the USSR. At the beginning of February 1941 Hungary pledged itself to place 15 combat units at Germany's disposal for a war against the USSR, to complete its war preparations along the Soviet frontier, give German troops transit to the frontier and also to the districts adjoining Yugoslavia, and ensure supplies to them across Hungary. At the close of May 1941 the Horthy regime began forming the Carpathian group of Hungarian forces for a war against the USSR.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

Among Hungary's leaders there was some disagreement only over the time of their involvement in Nazi aggression. The more circumspect wanted to wait a little in the belief that, among other things, Germany's invasion of the USSR would facilitate a reconciliation between Britain and Germany on an anti-Soviet basis and, consequently, a "crusade" against the USSR, which would, in turn, make Hungary's participation in this "crusade" a winning venture. The more impatient of Horthy's associates, the Regent himself, and the brass hats were eager to tell Berlin about Hungary's voluntary joining in the war against the USSR. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister László Bárdossy¹ on June 14, 1941, the Chief of the Hungarian General Staff Henrik Werth wrote: "Our association with the Axis powers makes Hungary's participation in the war mandatory. This is necessary also because we can count on a further expansion of the country's territory only if we staunchly and loyally abide by the policy of the Axis powers. As a reward we shall most certainly recover all the territories of historical Hungary. Authoritative quarters in Germany have always hinted this, while the policy hitherto pursued by the Axis powers allows one to be quite certain of this."²

On June 23, 1941, the government of Hungary broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR. The Hungarian envoy in Moscow, who forwarded this decision to the Soviet government on the evening of June 23, was told that the Soviet Union had no claims on Hungary and no aggressive designs against it.³ But it was no longer possible to hold the Horthy clique back from attacking the Soviet Union.

A dirty provocation scripted by the German Air Attache Fütterer and the Chief of the Hungarian General Staff's Operational Department László was used by the Horthy regime as a pretext for attacking the USSR. In accordance with this scenario, German aircraft bearing Soviet insignia bombed Koszyce, Mukachevo, Rachov, and other towns, killing many civilians. As

¹ László Bárdossy became Hungary's Prime Minister after Pál Teleki had realised the failure of this foreign policy and committed suicide on April 3, 1941.

² *Hungary and the Second World War*, p. 254.

³ V. L. Issraelyan, L. N. Kutakov, *Diplomacy of Aggressors. The German-Italian-Japanese Fascist Bloc. Its Rise and Fall*, Moscow, 1967, p. 126 (in Russian).

planned, this was used as a pretext for beginning hostilities against the USSR at dawn on June 27, 1941. On that day, without advance approval by the Hungarian parliament, the Prime Minister László Bárdossy officially declared a state of war between Hungary and the USSR, referring to an "unprecedented Soviet attack in violation of the Hungarian people's sovereign rights". When Bárdossy was pronouncing these words he had in his pocket a written report from the Koszyce aerodrome chief that the bombing was the work of German aircraft.¹

Also on that day Bárdossy sent the Hungarian envoy in Germany Döme Sztojay instructions to tell the German Foreign Ministry that "in each decision it makes the Hungarian government wishes to act in full concord with the Axis powers, with the Reich government in the first place".²

Of course, it was not the Horthy regime that expressed the actual will of the Hungarian people and their true attitude to the piratical attack on the USSR. The vast majority of the Hungarian working people deplored the war against the USSR, while their most conscious segment headed by the Hungarian Communists opposed it actively. At a sitting on June 28, 1941, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Hungary noted that in the obtaining situation the chief danger to Hungary was its subservience to German fascism and that it was in the best interests of the Hungarian people to halt the war against the Soviet Union. This, the Hungarian Communists declared, had to be the aim of all of the nation's classes and political parties.³

4. THE USSR AND YUGOSLAVIA

The Soviet Union went to great lengths to prevent fascist aggression from spreading to Yugoslavia. Many factors obstructed Soviet support for that country's struggle for independence and sovereignty. These were, above all, its economic and political dependence on Germany and Italy which was heightened following France's defeat in June 1940, and also British and French activity. The fascist states were determined to place Yugoslavia in economic bondage. As early as 1936 Germany became predom-

¹ *Hungary and the Second World War*, pp. 246-47.

² *Ibid.*, p. 262.

³ A. I. Pushkash, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

inant in Yugoslavia's foreign trade; by 1940 its share of that trade had risen to 60 per cent. A trade agreement signed by Germany and Yugoslavia in October 1940 made the latter country more dependent on Germany than ever before.¹ The Yugoslav government pursued a policy of complicated balancing between the two imperialist groups.

Anti-communism and hostility towards the Soviet Union were part and parcel of the foreign policy pursued by monarchist Yugoslavia. This was one of the few European countries that had no diplomatic relations with the USSR. Until early 1940 a white-guard émigré mission occupied the building of the former legation of tsarist Russia in Belgrade.

However, the growing threat from Germany made the Yugoslav government increasingly interested in normalising relations with the USSR. It had to take into account also the situation in the country, the public mood. Many Yugoslav patriots saw the USSR as the nation's mainstay against fascist aggression. The working people and influential political forces pressed for rapprochement with the Soviet Union. At the close of March 1940, acting through the Soviet embassy in Turkey, the Yugoslav government offered the USSR to establish economic relations between the two countries.² A trade and navigation treaty, an accompanying protocol on the maintenance of a Soviet trade mission in Yugoslavia and an interim Yugoslav trade delegation in the USSR, and a trade and payment agreement for 1940-1941 were signed in Moscow on May 11, 1940.³ In 1940-1941, trade between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was to amount to 176 million dinars. The Soviet Union expected to import copper and concentrates of lead and zinc ore from Yugoslavia and export farm and other machinery, kerosene, cotton, and other commodities.⁴

After the successful completion of the economic talks and the exchange of the instruments of ratification the USSR and Yugoslavia established diplomatic relations. This was announced on June 25, 1940.⁵

¹ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 258.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 502.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

In Yugoslavia the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR was welcomed as an act in support of the struggle waged by the peoples of Yugoslavia for their country's sovereignty in the face of the mounting threat from nazism. When it became known that Milan Gavrilović had been appointed envoy to the USSR he received many letters and telegrams from all over Yugoslavia, urging him to work towards strengthening relations with the USSR. On July 6, on the occasion of the arrival of the first-ever Soviet ambassador in Belgrade (V. A. Plotnikov), there was a demonstration in the Yugoslav capital calling for an alliance with the USSR.

In Germany and Italy there was a negative reaction to the normalisation of the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. The Italian envoy in Belgrade Francesco Giorgio Mameli and Italy's charge d'affaires ad interim in Moscow Luciano Mascia reported to Rome that the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia was prejudicing the Axis positions in the Balkans, devaluing the preceding anti-Soviet line of the Yugoslav ruling quarters.¹ Before Gavrilović's departure for the USSR the German envoy in Yugoslavia Viktor von Heeren warned him unequivocally that Berlin had taken a negative attitude to his mission in Moscow.²

Germany and Italy were counting on unchallenged supremacy in the Balkans, gaining possession of strategic footholds in the Black and Aegean seas, and controlling the Straits. "Germany," the Soviet embassy in Belgrade reported at the close of 1940, "intended to paralyse the Soviet Union with the unexpectedness of its actions in the Balkans."³

An important Soviet counter-measure to the German plans for undermining the Soviet Union's influence and prestige in the Balkans was, among other things, the representation handed to von Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, on the Danube issue on September 10, 1940. "This demarche by the Soviet government and the corresponding TASS statement about USSR's desire to see the Danube problems settled," reported the

¹ N. D. Smirnova, *Fascist Italy's Balkan Policy. A Glance at Diplomatic History (1936-1941)*, Moscow, 1969, pp. 171-73 (in Russian).

² J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis. 1934-41*, Columbia University Press, New York-London, 1962, pp. 177-78.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Soviet embassy in Belgrade, "were a painful setback for the pro-German elements in Yugoslavia."¹ Further, the embassy wrote that the transfer of German troops to Romania in the autumn of 1940 was accompanied by heightened German diplomatic activity in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In September the German government demanded transit for German troops and military supplies across Yugoslavia in the direction of Salonika for the alleged purpose of backing up important German operations in Africa. "Yugoslav diplomatic circles pointed out that this demand includes giving Germany a 10-kilometre corridor and the right to bring in German troops to guard it. The granting of this demand would turn Yugoslavia into a German protectorate,"² the Soviet embassy wrote.

On October 17, 1940, the Soviet government instructed its ambassador in Belgrade to inform the Yugoslav government that the Soviet Union "shows understanding for Yugoslavia and for the struggle of the Yugoslav people for their political and economic independence".³

In this situation the USSR took steps to reinforce political support for Yugoslavia. On November 5, 1940, in a talk with A. Y. Vyshinsky, the First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, on the latest developments in the Balkans Milan Gavrilović noted that the situation was steadily deteriorating. It was not to be excluded that German troops would enter Bulgaria. The envoy stressed that "the interests of the USSR coincide with the interests of all Balkan states, with the interests of Yugoslavia in particular".⁴

In its recommendations for long-term Soviet diplomatic actions, contained in the political survey for the latter half of 1940, the Soviet embassy in Yugoslavia wrote that the Soviet Union "can and should oppose the shift of the flames of war to this part of Europe. But the success of Soviet actions presupposes active Bulgarian and Yugoslav opposition to British and German intentions to move the war to the Balkans. Only sincere rapprochement

by these countries with the USSR can give the Soviet government effective instruments for preserving peace in the Balkans."¹

Succumbing to heavy pressure from Nazi Germany, Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941. In response to this, there was an outburst of public outrage in the country. Rallies and demonstrations protesting against the treachery of the ruling quarters swept across the whole of Yugoslavia. Workers, servicemen, and students took part in the protest movement. Many thousands of peasants marched to the towns. In the early hours of March 27, in order to forestall the initiative of the masses, a coup was accomplished by a number of bourgeois groups and also the brass hats leaning towards Britain and the USA. They deposed the Prince Regent Pavel and the Cvetković-Maček government, installed the under-age Peter II on the throne, and formed a government under General Dušan Simović, Commander of the Yugoslav Air Force. The Simović government did not denounce the protocol on Yugoslavia's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact but did not venture to ratify it. The Yugoslav Communists were very active in the events of March 1941. Articulating the will of the people, they urged an alliance with the USSR, seeing it as the guarantee of the Yugoslav people's freedom and independence.

Because the coup was on the whole directed against Germany and thus constituted an extremely undesirable factor on the eve of the invasion of the USSR, Hitler decided to attack Yugoslavia. At a special conference of the Wehrmacht High Command on March 27, 1941, Hitler announced his intention "to make all preparations to destroy Yugoslavia militarily and as a national unit."² He added that had "the coup taken place during the Barbarossa operation the consequences to us would have been much more serious".³

Soviet diplomacy promptly supported Yugoslavia in its resistance to the German threat. Under pressure from the people the new Yugoslav government sent a delegation headed by Milan Gavrilović, who held the post of Minister Without Portfolio, for talks with the Soviet government. A treaty of friendship and

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. XV, 1948, p. 476.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 22.

non-aggression was signed by the USSR and Yugoslavia in Moscow on April 5, 1941. This step was attested to the USSR's determination to rebuff German fascism in the Balkans. In view of the inevitable nazi aggression against Yugoslavia the treaty with the USSR ranged beyond the framework of bilateral interstate relations, acquiring considerable international significance.

This treaty consisted of five articles. Under Article 1 the two countries undertook to refrain from any attack on one another and to respect each other's independence, sovereign rights, and territorial integrity. Article 2 stated that should either of the contracting parties be subjected to attack from a third state, the other contracting party undertakes to "observe a policy of friendship toward it."¹ This wording substantially—in favour of Yugoslavia—differed from the commitments usually given in non-aggression treaties. The signing of this treaty was considerable moral and political support for Yugoslavia at a bitter time for its peoples.

However, nazi Germany was preparing to attack the USSR in the immediate future and was now stopping at nothing. At dawn on April 6 it perfidiously attacked Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia's military defeat soon followed—the forces were much too unequal. On April 15, 1941, the Yugoslav government ordered the army to cease hostilities. But on that same day the political force which headed the Yugoslav people's resistance to the nazi invaders made itself heard. "Know that this struggle will end in victory even if the enemy, who is stronger, now overwhelms you... The Communists and the entire working class of Yugoslavia will hold out in the front ranks of the people's struggle against the invaders until final victory is won,"² stated an address of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to the peoples of that country. The resistance movement in Yugoslavia was an armed struggle from the very outset.

* * *

Soviet policy in the Balkans created some conditions for narrowing the gap between Soviet and British positions. Of course, the British sought to protect their imperialist interests in the

Balkans. Nevertheless, Soviet opposition to nazi aggression in the Balkans was a serious factor helping to improve Soviet-British relations and mobilise efforts against nazi Germany.

The drive to strengthen the Soviet Union's security in the southwest and in the Balkans was a major direction of Soviet diplomatic activity during the early period of the Second World War. Above all, the USSR consistently countered Germany's expansionism and gave a rebuff to the anti-Sovietism in the policies of the rulers of Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. At the same time it showed constant readiness to establish not only normal relations with these countries but also goodneighbourly relations based on security, equality, and the settlement of outstanding problems by peaceful means.

¹ J. B. Hoptner, op. cit., p. 307.

² *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 266.

Chapter 5 IN THE SOUTH

There were many obstacles to Soviet diplomatic efforts to make the USSR secure in the south. The neutrality proclaimed by the Soviet Union's three southern neighbours – Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan – could not be reduced to a common denominator. The two imperialist coalitions were going to all lengths to win the foreign policy orientation of these countries; nor was there consistency in the policies pursued by their leaders, particularly of Turkey and, to a large extent, of Iran. Quite often Ankara and Tehran based their calculations on situation changes, pursuing the line of supporting the strongest.

In keeping with the basic task of ensuring the USSR's security Soviet policy towards Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan was differentiated in accordance with how far these countries were prepared to develop positive relations with the Soviet Union. Soviet diplomacy did not relax its vigilance relative to the active anti-Soviet game that the two imperialist coalitions, notably Britain and Germany, were playing in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan.

1. THE USSR AND TURKEY

THE IMPERIALIST "DUEL FOR TURKEY" AND THE POSTURE OF THE USSR

Security and peace along the Soviet Union's southern frontiers largely depended on the attitude of Turkey, which had a common land frontier with the USSR in the Transcaucasus and controlled the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. With a war raging, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea straits, and the Black Sea itself were becoming a theatre of an increasingly intricate

diplomatic struggle, and in this situation more circumspection than ever had to be displayed by Soviet foreign policy. The need for better relations with Turkey had to be weighed against the risk of being lured into dangerous traps set up by both imperialist groups. Moreover, the manoeuvres of Turkey's rulers had to be constantly watched and steps taken in good times in response to anti-Soviet trends in Ankara.

Both imperialist coalitions were attracted by Turkey's control of the Black Sea straits, the possibility of using Turkish territory as the shortest route to the Middle East, and Turkey's proximity to vitally important regions of the Soviet Union. The vigorous efforts of the belligerent groups to win Turkey to their side were called the "duel for Turkey" by the German ambassador in Ankara Franz von Papen.

The Nazi leaders attached serious significance to the fact that among the Middle East states Turkey had the largest armed forces. They regarded Turkey as an important factor in the war against Britain and France and, more broadly, in the oncoming war against the USSR. The German government wanted Turkey to join the fascist Axis and elaborated a far-reaching plan for penetrating Turkey economically and politically. The significance that Berlin attached to the fight for Turkey can be gauged by the fact that von Papen, a past master of espionage, subversion, and international provocations, was sent to Ankara as Germany's ambassador in April 1939.

Special attention was given to this region also in the British and French capitals, especially in London. The Bulgarian historian L. Zhivkova writes: "Although the unending financial and economic demands of the Turkish government created great difficulties for Britain, in London they did not feel that this was too high a price for Ankara's political and military cooperation."¹ In their "duel for Turkey" both groups of imperialist powers used the "Soviet threat" bogey to intimidate Ankara.

Speaking to the Soviet ambassador in London on October 6, 1939, Winston Churchill said that for Britain it was particularly important that Germany did not get to the Black Sea, for if it seized control of the Danube estuaries it would inevitably move

¹ L. Zhivkova, *Anglo-Turkish Relations 1933-1939*, Moscow, 1975, p. 141 (Russian translation).

on to Asia Minor, Iran, and India. From this stemmed the basic line of British policy in Southeast Europe. It was from this angle he said, that friendship with Turkey and also the possibility, in case of emergency, of sending naval vessels to the Black Sea were important to Britain.¹ This statement by Churchill reflected the official British interpretation of Britain's central objective in the Balkans and the Middle East in the initial period of the Second World War. However, here, as in other cases, the second aspect of British policy in this region was omitted deliberately.

London was very eager to draw the USSR into such diplomatic combinations in this region as would, in one way or another, provoke an aggravation of Soviet-German relations. British and French diplomacy tried to benefit from the Soviet Union's natural desire to reinforce its security in the Black Sea and the Black Sea straits and gradually involve the USSR in the process of building up Anglo-Franco-Turkish allied relations in order to get the most advantageous unilateral commitments from the USSR with as little compensation for them as possible. As the British and Turkish manoeuvres around the Soviet Union's negotiations with Turkey on a mutual assistance pact, held in the autumn of 1939, showed, London and Paris tried to push the USSR into a confrontation with Germany without giving any serious guarantees on their part. All this was carefully camouflaged with repeated assurances that Britain and France were "sincerely" interested in an improvement of Soviet-Turkish relations.

The struggle to prevent the Black Sea straits from being used against peaceful states by an aggressor from any of the two imperialist groups was of particularly great significance to Soviet foreign policy. On September 4, 1939, the Soviet government instructed its ambassador in Ankara A. V. Terentyev to tell the Foreign Minister Sükrü Saracoglu and, if an opportunity presents itself, the Turkish President Ismet İnönü that if the question arose of guarantees of Soviet assistance to Turkey in the event it was attacked in the region of the Straits, Turkey would have to guarantee equivalent assistance to the Soviet Union in the same region.²

In Moscow, on the same day, V. M. Molotov received the

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

Turkish ambassador to the USSR Ali Haydar Aktay. In the ensuing talk Aktay declared that "his government has no intention of adopting any new decisions in relation to the war that has broken out. Turkey continues to have good relations with Britain and France and also with their enemies." Molotov remarked that the "Soviet stand is known to the ambassador from the report delivered at the session of the Supreme Soviet. It was not our fault that the talks which the USSR had with Britain and France yielded no results. The fault lies with the British, the French, and the Poles. We had to look for other opportunities to allow the Soviet Union, which does not want to participate in the war if it is not attacked, to pursue a policy of peace." Aktay asked whether the Turkish government could hope for an early conclusion of the talks on a pact between the USSR and Turkey. Molotov replied that the international situation had changed and required study. The Soviet Union, he said, has been and will remain a friend of Turkey, and the two countries will find a common language.¹

On September 7, 1939, the Turkish President Ismet İnönü declared in a conversation with A. V. Terentyev that he wholeheartedly welcomed the Soviet statement that the USSR had been and would remain a friend of Turkey. The Turkish government, he said, notes with gratification that the "relations between the two countries will continue to be friendly". "We," he continued, "have to study the present situation in order to determine our stand towards Britain and France. If we reach agreement, war will not come to the region of the Straits." On the basis of this conversation Terentyev drew the following conclusion: "Evidently, in order to defuse in Turkey the strained atmosphere of uncertainty and all sorts of conjectures about the Soviet stand towards Turkey İnönü would now like to parade strong friendship between the two countries."²

On September 8, 1939, Saracoglu invited the Soviet ambassador and handed him Turkey's reply to the Soviet government's statement of September 4. This reply contained the draft of a treaty proposed by the Turkish government. The draft had the following fundamental points:

"a) In the event of aggression by European powers in the Black

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

Sea region, including the Straits, against Turkey and the USSR, the High Contracting Parties will cooperate effectively and render each other all the support and all the assistance in their power.

"b) In the event of aggression by European powers against Turkey or against the USSR in the region of the Balkans, the High Contracting Parties will cooperate effectively and render each other all the support and all the assistance in their power...

"c) The commitments undertaken by Turkey in accordance with Articles "a" and "b" cannot compel Turkey to take action that would place it in a state of armed conflict with Great Britain or France."¹

It was noteworthy that in accordance with this draft, which was agreed upon by the British and the French, the USSR would have to go to war against Germany in the event it attacked Turkey. For its part, Turkey would not have to help the USSR in the event it found itself in a state of war with Britain and France. This approach did not, of course, take the security of the sides into equal account and was thus clearly one-sided. Nevertheless, motivated by security interests, the Soviet government agreed to begin talks with Turkey.

SOVIET-TURKISH TALKS IN MOSCOW

The Turkish Foreign Minister Sükrü Saracoglu arrived in Moscow on September 25, 1939. The subject of the talks was a bilateral mutual assistance pact limited to the region of the Black Sea and the Straits. In addition, the Soviet government wanted solid guarantees that the Straits would not be used by aggressive powers to the detriment of the USSR.

In order to bring pressure to bear on the Soviet Union during the talks, Saracoglu repeatedly stressed that an Anglo-French-Turkish pact had already been negotiated and had not been signed only because the Turkish government felt it was necessary to consult with Moscow first. Saracoglu declared that this pact could not be used against the USSR because Turkey had introduced a reservation that it would never go to war against the USSR.²

The Bulgarian historian L. Zhivkova quite rightly notes: "By

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

rejecting the Soviet government's justified wish to have real guarantees that the Straits would not be used by aggressive powers, Turkey's rulers raised an insuperable obstacle to the signing of the bilateral treaty on mutual assistance offered by Soviet representatives at the talks with the Turkish Foreign Minister, who came to Moscow at the close of September 1939."¹

There was heightened British diplomatic activity around the talks in Moscow. On October 17, 1939, R. Butler told the Soviet ambassador in London that the British government wished the Soviet-Turkish negotiations were consummated successfully. An Anglo-Turkish treaty had been drawn up long ago and only awaited to be signed. Saying that while Saracoglu was in Moscow the Turks had consulted with the British government and suggested some changes in the wording of the Anglo-Turkish treaty that had been agreed upon earlier, and that the British government had accepted the Turkish proposals, Butler stressed that Britain would not object to the inclusion in the treaty of the provision that Turkey would under no circumstances go to war against the USSR and "that it was prepared to accept the closure of the Straits to the warships of all nations."²

What aim was British diplomacy actually pursuing through its interference in the talks between the USSR and Turkey? Had the Soviet Union signed the mutual assistance pact with Turkey on the latter's terms it could, in fulfilment of its commitments to Turkey, have found itself at war with Italy and Germany without having any guarantees of assistance from Britain and France. Thus, the Saracoglu proposal could indirectly – through Turkey – bring the USSR into an unequal military alliance with the Anglo-French bloc and precipitate a collision with Italy and Germany. Using Turkey as its instrument this time, Anglo-French diplomacy endeavoured to achieve in a new way the aim it had pursued at the talks with the Soviet Union in the summer of 1939, i.e., to bind the USSR with unilateral commitments.

The Soviet government saw this trap and, consequently, could not sign a pact on such terms. It proposed reaffirming the 1925 Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Turkey. Saracoglu rejected this proposal.

¹ L. Zhivkova, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Parallel with the talks with the USSR the Turkey government conducted negotiations with Britain and France which ended on October 19, 1939, the day after Saracoglu returned from Moscow, with the signing in Ankara of an Anglo-Franco-Turkish treaty on mutual assistance. Under that treaty Turkey undertook to go to the assistance of Britain and France in the event of war breaking out in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Saracoglu made a revealing admission in a talk with the Soviet ambassador in Ankara on October 26, 1939. The Anglo-Franco-Turkish pact, he said, "was initialled before his departure for Moscow, and the signing was put off only on account of the talks that were to be held between the Turkish Foreign Minister and leaders of the Soviet government". For his part, the ambassador conveyed to Saracoglu the Soviet government's view of the treaty that Turkey had signed with Britain and France: "The Soviet government feels that the conclusion of this treaty without the adoption of the amendments proposed by us puts Turkey at risk. The Soviet government cannot be a party to this business."¹

On October 31, 1939, informing the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the negotiations with Turkey, V. M. Molotov said: "All sorts of fables are being spread abroad about the substance of these negotiations. Some assert that the USSR has demanded the districts of Ardahan and Kars... Others allege that the USSR has demanded a modification of the Montreux Convention and preferential rights in the question of the Straits. This too, is an invention and a lie. Actually, the issue was the conclusion of a bilateral pact on mutual assistance limited to the Black Sea area and the Straits. The USSR felt, first, that the conclusion of such a pact should not induce it to take actions that could bring it into an armed conflict with Germany and, second, that the USSR should have the guarantee, in view of the threat of war, that Turkey would not permit warships of non-Black Sea states to pass through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. Turkey rejected both these Soviet reservations and thereby made it impossible to sign the pact."²

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Extraordinary Fifth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, October 31-November 2, 1939, Verbatim Report, Moscow, 1939, p. 21 (in Russian).*

The Soviet-Turkish talks helped to clarify some of the political issues which were of interest to the USSR. There was one more circumstance of no little significance: although the negotiations yielded no result, this did not, as the adversaries of the USSR hoped, exacerbate Soviet-Turkish relations. This was largely due to the efforts of Soviet diplomacy to prevent anti-Soviet feeling from growing in Ankara.

TWISTS IN TURKISH POLICY

Soviet diplomacy missed no opportunity to draw the attention of government quarters in Turkey to the need for a positive development of the relations between the two countries and for greater understanding between them in a situation where some political forces and the press of Turkey were supporting the anti-Soviet campaign started in the West in connection with the armed conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland.

In a talk with the Soviet ambassador on January 5, 1940, Saracoglu admitted that the Turkish press had indeed adopted an "incorrect" attitude towards the Soviet Union. But he assured the ambassador that the press did not in any way reflect the views of Turkey's leaders. Further, he agreed that the "anti-Soviet posture of the Turkish press was not helping to strengthen relations between Turkey and the USSR". In response to the Soviet ambassador's insistence Saracoglu promised to "take effective steps in regard to the Turkish press".¹ As was noted by the Soviet embassy in Turkey, the Turkish government, which adhered to a clearly anti-Soviet stand in the early months of 1940, was then compelled to modify its attitude towards the USSR at least outwardly.²

Concurrently, a realistic tendency was laboriously surfacing in the policies of the Turkish government. This was seen quite clearly in Ankara's attitude to the Anglo-French calculation on drawing Turkey into anti-Soviet aggressive acts from the south.

In London and Paris they felt Turkey could be induced to participate in the planned aggression. Acting on this belief, on

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

January 19, 1940, the French government, in agreement with the British leadership, instructed General Maurice Gamelin and Admiral François Darlan to plan "an invasion of the Caucasus". There was an analogous premise in the British Plan M. A. 6 and the French R. I. P. plan, both of which provided for bombing raids in the southern regions of the USSR. Both plans had been elaborated in the spring of 1940. Moreover, in Gamelin's report "On the Conduct of War" of March 16, 1940, it was noted that the French forces in the Levant (Syria and the Lebanon) could count on operations by Turkish troops in the Transcaucasus.¹

Turkey's political and military leaders did not at once express their negative attitude to the planned aggression against the USSR. This was what reinforced British and French hopes that Turkey would participate in an invasion of the USSR. But what counted was the end result—Turkey told London and Paris that it was unwilling to be a partner in organising an attack on the USSR. In so doing the Turkish government referred to the Anglo-Franco-Turkish military alliance treaty of October 19, 1939, which stated that the undertaken commitments could not compel Turkey to take action whose results or consequences would involve it in an armed conflict with the USSR.²

In the summer of 1940 the situation in the Mediterranean was visibly compounded by Italy's entry into the war. It seemed that under the terms of the Anglo-Franco-Turkish treaty Turkey would join its allies against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. However, on the plea that it was "inadequately armed" Turkey did not honour its commitments under the 1939 treaty. While it had a treaty on mutual assistance with Britain and France, Turkey took increasing account of Germany's military successes in Western Europe and refrained from any political actions of an anti-German character. Ankara's increasing tilt towards Germany did not pass unnoticed by Soviet diplomacy, which had to act accordingly.

With the situation in the Balkans aggravated by Italy's invasion of Greece at the close of October 1940, the USSR showed its understanding for Turkey's concern over the new develop-

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 46-47 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

ments and continued its line towards a positive development of its relations with Turkey. At the same time, the Soviet Union remained vigilant against attempts to draw it into military conflicts without guarantees of its security.

Meanwhile the imperialist powers continued their duel over Turkey's foreign policy orientation, and Ankara manoeuvred in order to achieve a reconciliation of what was in fact incompatible. British diplomacy was preoccupied with the idea of forming a "Balkan front" with the purpose of preventing German expansion in Southern Europe.¹ London went on using the bogey of a "Soviet threat" to obtain sites for military bases in Turkey. In a letter of January 31, 1941, to the Turkish President İsmet İnönü, Churchill wrote that Britain was the only country that could really "safeguard" Turkey against the Soviet Union's "aggressive designs". "Powerful British bombing forces" based in Turkey, he insisted, "could attack the oilfields of Baku", adding that "Russia is dependent upon the supply from these oilfields... and far-reaching famine would follow their destruction."²

A British military mission was sent to Turkey in February 1941. It inspected fortified sectors in Eastern Thrace, the Dardanelles, and İzmir. At talks in Ankara, in which the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff General John G. Dill participated, the British urged Turkey to permit the British Mediterranean Squadron to enter the Black Sea via the Dardanelles. A communique, released on March 1, 1941, stated that the "two governments place on record their firm attachment to the Anglo-Turkish Alliance" and their full agreement on the Balkan problems that were closely linked to the common interests of Turkey and Britain.³ In this way efforts were made to draw Turkey into the planned "Balkan front".

Impressed by Germany's military successes in the West, Turkey's rulers were increasingly inclined to assist Nazi aggression. This was more and more frequently mirrored in the reactionary press that printed all sorts of provocative fabrications about Soviet policy towards Turkey. Under these conditions the Soviet

¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, *The Grand Alliance*, Cassell and Co. Ltd., London, 1950, pp. 20, 33.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ *The New York Times*, March 1, 1941.

government found it necessary to take steps to counter the growth of German influence in Turkey.

On March 9, 1941, A.Y. Vyshinsky invited the Turkish ambassador Ali Haydar Aktay and made the following statement: "The Soviet government understands from advice received from the British ambassador Cripps, who has just returned from Turkey, that Turkey fears that if it is attacked by any foreign power and has to defend its territory with arms in hand, the Soviet Union will take advantage of its difficulties and attack it. I am authorised to state on behalf of the government and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that this presumption is totally at variance with the stand of the Soviet government and that, on the contrary, should Turkey be attacked by a foreign power and forced to defend its territorial inviolability with arms in hand, it can, in accordance with the non-aggression pact between it and the USSR, count on the full understanding and neutrality of the Soviet Union."¹

The Soviet Union informed London of this anti-German diplomatic action. On March 10, 1941, Vyshinsky invited Sir Stafford Cripps and told him of the content of the statement made by him on March 9 to Aktay. Cripps expressed satisfaction.² On March 25, 1941, a statement was published in Moscow in which the USSR reassured the Turkish government that if Turkey were attacked it "could count on the full understanding and neutrality of the USSR".³ In connection with this statement the Turkish government expressed gratitude to the Soviet government and, for its part, declared that if the USSR found itself in a similar situation it could equally count on the full understanding and neutrality of Turkey.⁴

After Germany had achieved further military successes in the Balkans, notably after its conquest of Yugoslavia and Greece, the Turkish leadership drew closer to the Third Reich. Turkey's President İnönü and Hitler started corresponding regularly. On the eve of the Nazi sneak invasion of the USSR there was a further zigzag in Turkey's policy: on June 18, 1941, Turkey signed

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, p. 547 (in Russian).

⁴ *Ibid.*

a ten-year "treaty of friendship and non-aggression" with Nazi Germany, under which the two countries "undertake in the future to consult with one another in a friendly spirit on all questions affecting their common interests".¹ An analogous treaty between Turkey and Britain remained in force. While it did not officially abandon its neutrality stand, Turkey tilted visibly towards an expansion of political and military cooperation with Berlin. In this situation the Soviet government had to begin taking major military measures to strengthen the USSR's frontier in the Transcaucasus and in the entire Black Sea region. These measures strongly influenced Turkish policy and the overall situation on the Soviet Armed Forces' southern flank during the Great Patriotic War.

When Nazi Germany attacked the USSR, Turkey proclaimed its neutrality but extended various assistance to the fascist aggressors, selling Germany strategic materials and permitting German and Italian warships to use the Straits.

2. THE USSR AND IRAN

In Tehran and some other capitals of the countries bordering on the USSR, Soviet diplomacy was actively opposed by two main forces throughout the initial period of the Second World War. These were British and German diplomacy. After the war broke out Britain and Germany competed fiercely for Iran's foreign policy and economic orientation.

The British and the Germans operated on a parallel course, so to speak, using one and the same tactic to win Iran. They spread rumours of a "Soviet threat" to Iran and posed as "defenders". At the same time, attempts were made to use Iranian territory for anti-Soviet purposes. The narrow-class policy of Iran's rulers, who had for many years cultivated anti-communism in internal and external affairs, prevented Tehran's assessing the international situation realistically. Iranian neutrality, proclaimed on September 4, 1939, was flimsy.

German diplomats constantly assured the Iranian government that the USSR had aggressive intentions relative to Iran, and claimed to be guarantors of Iran's independence.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XII, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1962, p. 1051.

FOR THE OBSERVANCE
OF TREATY OBLIGATIONS

The Soviet Union's principled attitude towards Iran had been adopted in the years immediately following the establishment of Soviet power. The treaty of February 26, 1921, between the RSFSR and Persia recorded the Soviet government's repudiation of all the treaties, conventions, and agreements signed by tsarist Russia and infringing the rights of the Iranian people. Guided in its relations with the peoples of the East by the Leninist policy and the principles of peaceful coexistence, the Soviet government declared its "refusal to take part in any action against Iran's sovereignty".¹

Article 5 of the treaty played a special role in Soviet-Iranian relations during the early period of the Second World War. Under paragraph 1 of Article 5 the two countries undertook to "prevent the formation or presence on their territory of organisations or groups of persons... whose object is to engage in acts of hostility against Persia or Russia".² On October 1, 1927, the legal foundation of Soviet-Iranian relations was reinforced with a guarantee and neutrality treaty.

In their totality, these treaties, especially several of their provision, were the framework within which Soviet foreign policy endeavoured to keep Iran's leaders. Of course, its aims were not confined to this framework. The Soviet Union made a considerable effort to normalise trade and economic relations with Iran, especially as these relations considerably shrank after the trade treaty between the USSR and Iran ceased to be effective in June 1938.

The Iranian yearbook *Universe* for 1967/68 contains some Iranian foreign policy documents showing that at the close of 1939 and in early 1940 Iranian diplomatic representatives in Moscow repeatedly assured the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the Soviet embassy in Iran that the attitude of the Iranian government was friendly.³ Some bourgeois, including

¹ *History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1945*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 147.

² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³ S. L. Agayev, *Iran: Foreign Policy and Problems of Independence, 1925-1941*, Moscow, 1971, p. 308 (in Russian).

Iranian, historians assert that the USSR was "unjustifiably concerned" over the safety of its southern frontiers and that Soviet diplomacy was "superfluously active" against "non-existent" anti-Soviet trends in Iran, which, they claimed, "faithfully" abided by neutrality. The USSR's legitimate and justified desire that both sides should comply with their treaty commitments is given out for "pressure from Moscow" on Iran.

In reality, the situation was different. To one extent or another Iran's rulers acted constantly in breach of the provisions of basic Soviet-Iranian treaties. For example, obstacles were erected artificially to the work of official Soviet representatives in Iran, especially prior to the conclusion of the new Soviet-Iranian trade treaty of March 25, 1940. The police harassed Soviet citizens working in Iran. The Soviet club in Pahlevi was placed under police surveillance. The repressive measures by the Iranian government led to the cessation of the release of Soviet films in Iran. The Foreign Ministry and other government agencies and ministries stubbornly ignored the Soviet trade mission in Tehran. Moreover, it was stated that because there was no trade agreement the trade mission should be closed.¹

The situation on the Soviet-Iranian frontier was uneasy as well. From time to time dangerous incidents were provoked by the Iranians. Moreover, the Iranian authorities connived at the activities of armed gangs along the Soviet-Iranian state frontier. In the period between January 1939 and August 1940 there were 38 instances of such gangs attacking Soviet citizens from Iranian territory.²

IMPERIALIST POWERS FIGHT FOR IRAN

The political line followed by Iran's rulers encouraged Germany to count on Iran as a springboard opening the way not only to British possessions but also to Baku and the Soviet Central Asian republics. As soon as the Second World War broke out the German General Staff began working on plans for the invasion of Middle East countries, including Iran. The policy of the

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

Iranian leaders facilitated also the attainment of the nazis' immediate aim in Iran, namely, the wide use of that country's raw materials and food resources. In October 1939 Iran and Germany signed a secret protocol guaranteeing the supply of strategic raw materials to the Third Reich. German trade and economic penetration of the Iranian market proceeded at such a pace that in 1940-1941 Germany's share in Iran's trade went up to 45.5 per cent, while that of Britain dropped to 4 per cent. George Lenczowski, who was the Polish press attaché in Iran at the time, gives the following assessment of Iranian-German relations: "Such a policy was beneficial to both Germany and Iran, because it permitted them to continue and even to increase their mutual trade. An outright alliance between the two countries would have presented unnecessary inconveniences to both of them. Iran might have become a theater of hostilities because of possible British action, and consequently Germany would have lost a valuable source of supplies."¹

In the period between March 21, 1939, and March 20, 1940, the Iranian export to Germany amounted to 393,300,000 rials, while imports from Germany totalled 159,600,000 rials. Most of the large industrial and transport projects in Iran were built by German firms. The political physiognomy of German assistance was revealed in various ways. For instance the ceiling of the waiting hall of the railway station built in Tehran by the Germans had the shape of a swastika. The German colony in Iran, which was virtually a fifth column, numbered nearly 5,000. The circumstance largely explained the fact that the German mission was well informed about what the Iranian government was doing.²

Thus, anti-communism and indulgence with regard to pro-German elements led the Iranian government into drawing closer to nazi Germany. American diplomats in Tehran noted: "Germany knows that Iran's fundamental orientation is towards the West rather than Russia, and as Great Britain is at present not considered powerful enough to render effective assistance Germany is posing as Iran's next friend. The Shah's fear of com-

munist leads him to hope that Hitler may yet protect Iran against a Bolshevist invasion."¹

This was the situation in which Soviet diplomacy continued its efforts to win goodneighbourly relations with Iran and ensure constructive development of these relations on the basis of treaties. Simultaneously, the USSR resolutely countered manifestations of anti-Sovietism in the policy of Iran's leaders and the anti-Soviet activities of Germany and Britain in Iran. Had it not been for this policy on the part of the USSR, the anti-communist trends in the Iranian leadership, inflamed by the anti-Soviet intrigues of the imperialist powers, would probably have drawn Iran away from normal, let alone friendly, relations with its northern neighbour. It was largely due to Soviet diplomacy that some positive changes took place in Soviet-Iranian relations during the first half of 1940.

Also of no little significance were the dramatic changes in the international situation and a more realistic account that was taken of the situation by the Iranian leaders themselves. The war had sharply reduced the flow of goods via the Persian Gulf. Moreover, British military and economic assistance to Iran had diminished. On the other hand, the absence of conditions for normal trade with the USSR, above all the absence of a new trade treaty following the denunciation of the former treaty in 1938, and also for the normal transit of Iranian goods across Soviet territory was hurting the interests of business circles in northern Iran. Public opinion as well as Iranian businessmen were demanding a new trade treaty with the USSR.

The Soviet embassy wrote from Tehran that "the German occupation of the Netherlands and Belgium and then the defeat of France could not but be assessed in Iran as a crippling blow to Britain's ability to resist. These successes not only shook but also undermined confidence in Britain's strength. The Iranian government hastened to use the situation for its own purposes. It knew that the Soviet government would not remain indifferent to the stand taken by it in the war between Britain and Germany. Iran was faced with the problem of proving to the Soviet government

¹ George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948. A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*. Cornell University Press, New York, 1949, p. 167.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. III*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, p. 637.

its intention to adopt towards Britain a course that would show Iran's non-complicity in British plans."¹

An important factor contributing to this was the more constructive stand adopted by the Iranian government at the Soviet-Iranian talks on a new trade treaty that began in Moscow on January 24, 1940. The basis for these talks was the Soviet draft of a treaty of commerce and navigation submitted to the Iranians as early as March 4, 1939.

This stand by Tehran acquired increasing importance in view of the Anglo-French imperialist coalition's interest in using Iran against the USSR. The most graphic expression of this interest was the British and French planning of aggression against the USSR from the south. A report on the vulnerability of Soviet oil-producing regions submitted by the British Minister for Coordination of Defense Lord Alfred Chatfield to Britain's Chiefs of Staff Committee in October 1939 listed suitable sites for allied air bases for bombing raids against the Soviet Transcaucasus. The "suitable" places named included the Iranian airfields at Igdir, Ardebil, and Iranbidi.² In General Maurice Gamelin's report on the conduct of the war of March 16, 1940, it was noted that Britain could take the initiative in conducting land operations against the USSR from Iranian territory.³

However, in the long run the Iranian leaders responded negatively to British and French attempts to use Iran in their anti-Soviet plans. This was a significant indicator of the effectiveness of Soviet policy towards the southern neighbour.

RELATIONS REMAIN UNEASY

The Iranian-Soviet treaty of commerce and navigation, in which the basic terms of the 1935 treaty were retained, was signed in Tehran on March 25, 1940. Iranian imports of Soviet goods were to consist of annually established quotas for a sum not less than the value of Soviet imports from Iran. Provision was made for simplifying the licensing of imports and exports. Further, the treaty established the status of the Soviet trade mission.

In the Soviet Union it was felt that normalisation of trade

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, pp. 44-45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

contacts with Iran had paved the way for a further constructive development of relations between the two countries. A telegramme from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to the Soviet ambassador in Tehran M. Y. Filimonov stated: "The treaty of commerce signed on March 25 puts an end to the long treatyless period and is unquestionably an important step towards the normalisation and further development of economic relations between the USSR and Iran."

The volume of the commodity exchange was set in the treaty at 150 million rials on either side. But in 1940 this exchange fell short of the target. As was envisaged at the Soviet-Iranian talks, the Soviet Union sent a trade delegation to Tehran to specify the nomenclature for trade between the two countries, but for a long time the Iranian government delayed the settlement of this issue. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the fact that in accordance with the 1921 treaty the Soviet government had granted Iran the right of transit across Soviet territory, the Iranian government tried to use this right to expand economic relations with Germany. But the USSR categorically forbade the transit of armaments, ammunition, and military supplies generally, and also some other items. For that reason in its trade with Germany Iran had to go on using the main transit route across Turkey.¹

Despite the Soviet Union's desire to follow up on what had been achieved in its relations with Iran, the settlement of economic relations between the two countries did not bring about any perceptible improvement in their political relations. This was chiefly due to the inconsistency of the Iranian leaders and the continued anti-Soviet activities of the imperialist power. "The Shah is abiding by his traditional policy of manoeuvring between the big powers, and although the situation is difficult for Iran, he is doing nothing to improve relations with the USSR,"² the Soviet embassy reported from Tehran.

The Iranian government continued to violate Soviet-Iranian treaties and agreements. It denied visas to members of the trade mission, and delayed the issue of visas to other Soviet officials for as long as six months. Staff members of official Soviet institutions in Iran were subjected to arrest.³

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, 1956, p. 380.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

³ *Ibid.*

The Soviet government protested strongly against actions of this kind. Speaking to the Iranian ambassador Mohammed Sa'ed on October 19, 1940, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs S.A. Lozovsky cited instances of impermissible acts against Soviet citizens in Iran. The ambassador was told that instances of this kind "convince us that far from doing anything to stop such actions, the Iranian government is evidently even encouraging them. . . As regards the ambassador's assurances of the sincerity and friendship of the Iranian government towards the USSR, we shall judge this mainly by actual deeds and facts, not by words."¹

In the spring of 1941 the nazis began clearing the ground for a fascist coup in Iran.

Thus, during the initial period of the Second World War the ruling quarters in Iran played an intricate game. In its relations with the USSR Tehran was inconsistent, often bringing situation considerations into its calculations and neglecting to act as a good neighbour. Nevertheless Soviet policy kept Iran's rulers from sliding entirely into an anti-Soviet stand.

On June 26, 1941, the Iranian ambassador in Moscow Mohammed Sa'ed said in a verbal note to the Soviet government: "On instructions from its government, the embassy of Iran has the honour of informing the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that in the situation created by the war between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the government of Iran will observe full neutrality."²

3. THE USSR AND AFGHANISTAN

In a report on Afghanistan's home and foreign policy in 1939 and the first half of 1940, the Soviet embassy in Kabul described Soviet-Afghan relations as "normal and even friendly".³ This was its assessment of political and economic relations. Soon after the Second World War broke out, on September 5, 1939, Molotov had a meeting with the Afghan ambassador in Moscow Sultan Ahmed Khan. The Afghan government had instructed its ambassador to ascertain whether the USSR would continue its

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

trade with Afghanistan and whether transit routes across Soviet territory would be open for it. "Why not," Molotov replied. "However, our trade organisations must know what and how much goods the Afghans want to transport." The ambassador expressed gratitude for this positive reply.¹

The policy of neutrality proclaimed officially by Kabul on September 3, 1939, came under strong pressure from both belligerent imperialist groups, which endeavoured to incline the Afghan government towards active anti-Sovietism. Soviet diplomacy systematically explained to the nation's leaders the provocative nature of the inventions about a "Soviet threat" to Afghanistan that were most zealously manufactured by Britain. "Relative to the inventions, spread by the British press, about the so-called aggressive plans of the USSR with regard to Afghanistan," the Soviet embassy in Kabul reported, "we have, on instructions from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, informed the Foreign Ministry on February 13, 1940, that these inventions have nothing in common with the actual policy pursued by the USSR, which sincerely wishes to preserve and further promote its peaceful relations with Afghanistan."²

As the Soviet embassy reported, "the Afghans reacted very favourably to V.M. Molotov's statement at the sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on March 29, 1940, that the fantastic plans attributed to the Soviet Union of military campaigns against India, the East, and so on by the Red Army are so obviously wild that absurdities of this kind can only be believed by madmen. However under the influence of British propaganda the Afghan government continues to have doubts. In order to stress the peaceful nature of Soviet-Afghan relations and thereby calm public opinion the newspaper *Ishtab* has systematically, particularly in response to our repeated representations, printed refutations of the rumours spread in the colonial British press to the effect that Afghanistan is also prepared to enter into a military alliance with Turkey, Iran and Iraq against the USSR."³

The Afghan government did not rule out an expansion of economic relations with the fascist states, above all with Germany, but Britain continued to enjoy a predominant influence in Afghan-

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

istan. According to the Soviet embassy in Kabul, the pro-British trend in Afghanistan remained strong even after the Anglo-French coalition's catastrophic military setbacks in the spring and summer of 1940. "Holding the view that in this war with Germans and Italians the British will not hold out for long, some of the most influential members of the Afghan government, being closely linked with the British, have nonetheless been hoping that something would save Britain. Presently the Afghan government's foreign policy rests on this hope."¹

As in the case of the Soviet Union's other southern neighbours, British diplomacy sought to tie Afghanistan closer to itself, move it away from its neutrality posture, and prevent it from promoting goodneighbourly relations with the USSR. The anti-Soviet manoeuvres of the Chamberlain and Churchill cabinets, which encouraged anti-communist feeling among the Afghan leaders, were not always consistently rebuffed in Kabul. A dispatch from the Soviet embassy in Kabul noted: "It cannot be said that the Afghan government is entirely unaware of the tremendous strengthening of the USSR's internal and international positions. However, class, reactionary feudal-landowner thinking continues to prevent the Afghan government from embarking on a sincere development of relations with the USSR."² As in Turkey and Iran, British diplomacy seemed to emulate with Berlin in intimidating the ruling quarters in Afghanistan with the "Soviet threat" lie, seeking to sow suspicion about the USSR's intentions, and encouraging anti-Soviet propaganda.

The Soviet government countered the anti-Soviet intrigues of the imperialist powers with a course towards developing goodneighbourly relations with Afghanistan, a course founded back in the early years of Soviet power. Alongside the 1921 Soviet-Afghan treaty of friendship, also of immense importance was the treaty of neutrality and mutual non-aggression signed in Kabul in 1931. The latter treaty envisaged mutual non-interference in internal affairs and the prevention of armed groups and organisations hostile to the other side from being formed on the territory of any of the two countries. Moreover, it stipulated that neither the USSR nor Afghanistan would join in alliances or

agreements of a military or political character directed against the other side, and that should one country be drawn into war with a third power the other country would remain neutral.¹

Desiring to continue promoting relations with Afghanistan on the basis of goodneighbourliness and good will, the Soviet government resumed talks with Kabul on some important questions of a bilateral character, notably on frontier issues.²

An Afghan memorandum stated that Afghanistan could accept the final Soviet proposals. As regards frontier issues, first, they were the subject of ongoing talks; second, they were covered fully by the agreement that was being drawn up on this matter; and, third, the Soviet Union had already agreed, in principle, to the redemarcation of land sectors of the frontier to the full satisfaction of the Afghan side. It was agreed that the question of aid to Afghanistan would be decided not by a treaty but specially, in accordance with the actual situation.³ These understandings, reached in the spring of 1940 in a spirit of mutual understanding and in a constructive atmosphere, were finalised in 1946 in the form of a protocol that was signed together with a frontier agreement.⁴

A trade agreement for a term of one year and a volume of trade totalling 164 million afghanis was signed on July 23, 1940, as a result of talks between the representative of the Soviet Vostokintorg organisation in Kabul and the Afghan Minister of the National Economy, Chairman of the National Bank. With this agreement the USSR's share in Afghanistan's foreign trade was to rise from 23-25 to 42-45 per cent.

This agreement was evidence that both countries intended to promote their traditional goodneighbourly relations under wartime conditions as well. "Every step taken to strengthen links with the Soviet Union is met with approval. The new treaty, which provides for an expansion of trade between Afghanistan

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Documents*, Vol. 14, Moscow, 1968, pp. 392-95 (in Russian).

² A break was made in these talks from mid-1939 to February 1940 to enable the sides to draft their proposals.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

⁴ *Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union*, 1946, Moscow, 1952, pp. 141-44 (in Russian).

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

and the USSR, is likewise to be lauded,"¹ the newspaper *Islah* wrote on July 27, 1940.

In June 1940 and then in February 1941 the government of Afghanistan reiterated its decision to be neutral in the war. But the facts indicated that its policy of benefiting by the contradictions between the belligerent imperialist groups sometimes had the trappings of manoeuvring, which created conditions for German penetration of Afghanistan. The nazis were eager to have Afghanistan as an ally and hence to disrupt its neutrality. Thus, in the summer of 1940, acting through its envoy in Kabul, Germany suggested that Afghanistan should organise a rising of the Pash-tun tribes against the British authorities in the northwestern frontier province of India. Afghanistan was promised that in the event it assisted this rising it would be able to expand territorially through the acquisition of India's northern areas. The Afghan government declined this suggestion.

In order to bring pressure to bear on Kabul German diplomacy decided to make more active use of a familiar weapon – anti-Sovietism and the "Soviet threat" bogey. In the summer of 1940 the German and the Italian press alleged that the Soviet Union was preparing to attack Afghanistan and India. The newspaper *Islah*, which reflected the view of the government, published a statement by the Afghan ambassador in Ankara, which said: "I see no such danger. The USSR and Afghanistan are friends and the relations between them are friendly. I do not believe that the peace of the Eastern countries will be endangered by the USSR or that the USSR wishes to attack India across Eastern countries."²

On April 7, 1941, the Afghan ambassador Sultan Ahmed Khan, who had just returned from Kabul, called on Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs S. A. Lozovsky. "The ambassador congratulated the Soviet government on the consistent policy of peace that the Soviet Union had from the beginning of the war to the present been firmly pursuing in its relations with other countries. Stressing that the Afghan government had the best feelings for the government of the USSR, the ambassador declared that his Prime Minister had instructed him to convey, in

¹ Quoted from L. B. Teplinsky, *50 Years of Soviet-Afghan Relations, 1919-1969*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 105-06 (in Russian).

² Ibid.

addition to greetings, the firm desire of Afghanistan to promote and strengthen friendly relations with the USSR and that in this direction the Afghan government was prepared to do everything in its power. The ambassador repeated the last phrase twice."¹

On June 23, 1941, the day after Germany perfidiously attacked the USSR, the Afghan Foreign Minister Ali Mohamed Khan, acting on instructions from his government, officially told the Soviet ambassador in Kabul that the Afghan government would "maintain and strengthen friendly relations with the USSR".² This was an important manifestation of the goodneighbourly relations that had taken shape between the two countries.

The Soviet Union's course towards maintaining and promoting goodneighbourly relations with Afghanistan justified itself entirely in the strained and complex situation of the early period of the Second World War. Compared with the Soviet Union's other neighbours in the south – Turkey and Iran – Afghanistan was more than the above-mentioned countries in solidarity, although not entirely, with this course.

* * *

During the initial period of the Second World War the Soviet Union was consistent in its efforts to promote goodneighbourly relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Its firm and, at the same time, constructive policy significantly influenced the stand of Turkey's and Iran's rulers, holding their anti-Soviet aspirations in check.

A serious test of the efficacy of Soviet foreign policy along the country's southern borders was the attitude taken by Turkey and Iran to the Anglo-French plans for an invasion of the Caucasus and the bombing of the Transcaucasus. Neither Turkey nor Iran were persuaded to subscribe to these plans.

Although the Iranian government violated the treaties on which Soviet-Iranian relations were based and although the two imperialist groups conducted an active anti-Soviet diplomacy in Iran, the latter did not enter the orbit of the nazi bloc. Nor did Turkey, in fact, become a member of that bloc, although it took significant steps towards rapprochement with Berlin.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² Ibid.

The Soviet Union pursued a consistent line towards preserving and developing good neighbourly relations with Afghanistan. During that period Soviet policy was for Kabul the decisive international factor ensuring the neutrality course it had chosen to follow; it helped Afghanistan to ward off the intensifying attacks on its neutrality and also the attempts of Britain and Germany to incite Afghanistan against the USSR.

Chapter 6 IN THE EAST

During the initial period of the Second World War the international situation in Asia, notably the Far East, confronted Soviet foreign policy with tasks whose importance and magnitude were almost comparable with those that Soviet diplomacy was working on in the most important political directions in Europe. In the Far East militarist Japan stood poised against the Soviet Union on a huge geographical springboard. Nazi Germany's imperialist partner and the strongest capitalist power in Asia, Japan was the main threat to the USSR in this region. In the late 1930s the Japanese militarists had twice tested the USSR's resolve to rebuff their aggressive actions.

The military alliance with the fraternal Mongolian People's Republic was of inestimable significance to the USSR. In the protocol on mutual assistance between the USSR and the MPR, signed in March 1936, the sides undertook "in the event of a military attack on one of the Contracting Parties, to render each other every possible, including military, assistance."¹ By request of the Mongolian government there were in Mongolia Soviet military advisers and technical experts who were helping to train military personnel and jointly reinforce the defence of Mongolia's Far Eastern frontiers. The Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic bent every effort to normalise international relations in the Far East.

¹ *Soviet-Mongolian Relations. 1921-1974. Documents and Other Materials*, in two volumes, Vol. 1, Moscow-Ulan-Bator, 1975, p. 340 (in Russian).

1. MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FAR EAST

DESIGNS AND POLICY OF IMPERIALIST POWERS

In the period between 1939 and 1941 the leaders of imperialist Japan were completing the principal phase of their preparations for the struggle to redivide the world in collaboration with their main European partners in an imperialist coalition, namely, Germany and Italy. When the Second World War broke out the Japanese militarists further accelerated their buildup of the material resources for the aggression they were planning. While in 1938 the output of the military branches of Japan's industry was 2.7 times greater than that of the civilian extracting and manufacturing industries, in 1940 the disparity increased to 4.5 times. Compared with 1939, the production of arms and military equipment rose as follows in 1940; artillery by 51 per cent, tanks by 82 per cent, and machine-guns by 24 per cent. Sufficient armaments had been stockpiled for 95 divisions. Japan's military spending in the 1940/41 fiscal year absorbed over 80 per cent of the national budget.¹

In the continuing war with China Tokyo sought to expand its territorial seizures in that country. Moreover, plans were laid for alternative military operations: either in the north against the USSR, or in the south against the USA, Britain, and their allies. The priority of each of these alternatives was made dependent on the prevailing international situation. The strategic Plan "Otsu" (war against the USSR) envisaged the seizure of the Soviet Far East. In accordance with a decision adopted by the Imperial General Staff at the close of 1940 the main thrust was to be made in the direction the Maritime region, while ancillary operations were to be conducted in the direction of Blagoveshchensk with the objective, in the first phase, of seizing Vladivostok, Iman, Blagoveshchensk, and other towns. The objective of the second phase was the seizure of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur,

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945, Vol. 3, Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, p. 184 (in Russian).

Komsomol'sk-on-Amur, Sovetskaya Gavan, North Sakhalin, and Petropavlovsk-on-Kamchatka.¹

Throughout the entire initial period of the Second World War Japan fortified the Manchuria-Korea springboard for an invasion of the USSR. New fortifications, including 13 fortified areas, were built hastily along the Soviet-Manchurian frontier. In 1939 and 1940 the Kwantung Army was enlarged from nine to 12 divisions manned by 350,000 officers and men. The armies of the pro-Japanese puppet governments of Manchoukuo and Inner Mongolia were also reinforced. A headquarters of the Northern Military District was set up on Hokkaido in December 1940, and troops were deployed in North Japan, South Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands.

In view of the Japanese rulers' bent for aggression, the Soviet government had to maintain large armed forces along its Far Eastern frontiers. These were not only important to the defence of the USSR but, by fettering the Japanese army in China, were also a major prop for the national liberation struggle of the Chinese people against the Japanese militarists.

The USSR's efforts to ensure its security in the Far East were greatly complicated by the fact that the governments of the USA, Britain, and France (prior to its defeat) aspired to "appease" the Japanese militarists at the expense of the Soviet Union. The period between 1939 and 1941 saw these countries actively continuing a Far Eastern variant of the Munich policy.

The government of France was hoping to retain its colonial possessions in Indochina by means of a broad political compromise with Tokyo that would rechannel Japanese expansion northward. Paris abandoned its former policy of supporting China. As for Britain, as early as September 8, 1939, the British ambassador in Tokyo Robert L. Craigie handed the Japanese Foreign Minister a message from Lord Halifax proposing a peaceful settlement of the "China incident". In October 1939 British warships were withdrawn from Chinese ports to Singapore. After France's defeat, when London's potential for sufficiently strong resistance to Japanese expansion in the sphere of its Asian colonies had been undermined, Britain further invigorated its policy of "appeasing" Japan, confining this "appeasement" exclusively

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

to the southerly thrust of Tokyo's ambitions. In order to support the Japanese blockade of China, the British signed an agreement with Japan on June 20, 1940, on joint actions against violators of order and of the security of the Japanese armed forces in China. On July 17 the sides signed another agreement in Tokyo under which Britain undertook to prevent the transit of military supplies to China across Burma. Lastly, in August 1940, on Japanese insistence, British troops were pulled out of the settlements in Shanghai and Tientsin.¹

The hopes that the US imperialists had of coming to terms with Japan over "disputed issues" continued to determine their attitude to Japanese militarism. Washington was still counting on the development of Japanese expansion against the USSR. This was the angle from which the USA regarded Japan's projected southerly expansion. At first it was felt in Washington that this expansion was to be undertaken chiefly to acquire the strategic resources needed for aggression against the USSR. As regards China, it was denied serious US military, political, and economic support.

With Japan's "appeasement" getting priority, the US leaders abstained from effective attempts to limit Japanese aggression, despite the fact that USA had powerful, especially economic, levers for such attempts. The USA was Japan's main supplier of many strategic materials. In 1940 as much as 60 per cent of Japan's oil and oil-products came from the USA.² As for raw materials for the steel industry, the Japanese have themselves estimated that in 1940 imports of iron scrap from the USA accounted for 25 per cent of Japanese steel output.³ In September 1940 the Americans imposed some restrictions on the export of iron and steel scrap to Japan but this hardly affected the actual supply. More, in 1941, compared with 1940, the US export to Japan of pig iron, sheet steel, and metal scrap increased from four to five times in terms of value.⁴ At the beginning of the Second World War the USA accounted for 33-35 per cent of Japan's imports.¹

¹ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 171.

² *Japan's Decision for War*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1967, pp. 187-88.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴ *A History of War in the Pacific*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1958, p. 204 (in Russian).

¹ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 295.

All this indicates that for the sake of "appeasing" Japan and redirecting it northward, against the USSR, the American leaders deliberately risked their country's national security. Japan received direct aid in building up the material resources for aggression, which, despite Washington's calculations, was ultimately directed against the USA. Underlying this unprecedented strategic miscalculation by the US leaders was the hope that there would be a "Far Eastern Munich". Small wonder that American political leaders and historians, who groundlessly allege that the USSR had extended "economic aid" to the nazis during the initial period of the Second World War, try to recall as seldom as they can the real military and economic assistance that was extended on a mammoth scale by the USA to Japanese militarism, its principal adversary in Asia.

Against this international background, the activities of German diplomacy were a noteworthy feature of the situation in the Far East following the outbreak of the Second World War. As soon as the war began Berlin revised its diplomatic tactics in the Far East. The long-term aims of tying down the Soviet Union in the Far East with the help of militarist Japan and encourage friction in Soviet-Japanese relations up to military conflicts and even a major war, were temporarily conserved. In the obtaining situation Germany felt it was more important to use Japanese expansionism to achieve some of the Third Reich's immediate aims in the war against Britain and France. For tactical reasons Berlin was therefore prepared to contribute to a temporary "stabilisation" of Soviet-Japanese relations and even offered its mediation. "If this is achieved," Ribbentrop explained, "Japan will be able freely to extend its power in East Asia in a southerly direction and penetrate even farther."² The purpose of this German "peace-making" was to direct the forces of the Anglo-French coalition and also of the USA against Japan in order to secure the speedy defeat of Britain and France in Europe. After Germany got down to planning its invasion of the USSR in the latter half of 1940 Berlin's interest in this "stabilisation" evaporated.

Such a "change of priorities" in German diplomacy was largely due to the fact that in August and September 1939 the

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

USSR had reinforced its security in the West by, among other things, signing a non-aggression pact with Germany. Soviet diplomacy was thus able to ensure, towards the latter half of 1939, a fairly rare, externally paradoxical situation under which its main potential enemy in Europe was prompting the main potential enemy in Asia to stabilise relations with the USSR. This exemplified Soviet diplomacy's skill in using imperialist contradictions not only between the two groups of imperialist states divided by war but also in the camp of the most aggressive imperialist group.

SOVIET-MONGOLIAN VICTORY AT THE KHALKHIN-GOL

In the Far East September 1, 1939, was not a peaceful day for the USSR. There had been almost four months of fighting between Soviet-Mongolian forces and Japanese troops, which invaded fraternal Mongolia in the vicinity of the Khalkhin-Gol River on May 11. The hostilities against the USSR and the MPR were a "war of aggression by the Japanese,"¹ as was subsequently stated by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East at the Tokyo trial of major Japanese war criminals.

In a telegram congratulating Red Army units on the victory at the Khalkhin-Gol, the People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR Marshal K.Y. Voroshilov wrote: "In the battles against the presumptuous Japanese invaders our units defended not only the Soviet Union's friend, the Mongolian People's Republic, not only the inviolability of the treaties signed by the Soviet government, but also Soviet territory extending from Lake Baikal to Vladivostok. This provocative attempt of the Japanese to seize Mongolian territory pursues the aim of creating a bridgehead for an attack on the USSR, on the Soviet Trans-Baikal region."²

The offensive that was mounted on July 2, 1939, by the Japanese armed forces together with Manchurian troops had been repulsed by a Soviet-Mongolian group that had only one-third of the enemy's numerical strength. The Japanese July offensive failed, but the enemy continued bringing up new forces, includ-

¹ M. Y. Raginsky, S. Y. Rozenblit, *International Trial of the Major Japanese War Criminals*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1950, p. 199 (in Russian).

² *Soviet-Mongolian Relations, 1921-1974*, Vol. 1, p. 429.

ing crack Japanese air units from China and heavy artillery from the fortress of Port Arthur.

On September 1, 1939, Japan was the vanquished side. In the period from May to September 1939 it lost 660 aircraft. The casualties of the Japanese and Manchurian troops amounted to 52,000-55,000, including nearly 25,000 killed.¹

On September 9, 1939, the Japanese ambassador in Moscow Shigenori Togo called on the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and suggested an armistice and the formation of two commissions to demarcate the frontier between the USSR and Manchoukuo and between Mongolia and Manchoukuo. True to themselves, the Japanese militarists went so far as to resort to threats. Togo hinted that Japan had concentrated large forces in the conflict area and that further heavy clashes could be expected.² But the fact of military defeat was unquestionable, and in Tokyo they knew it. The Japanese government suggested turning the Khalkhin-Gol area into a demilitarised zone. Further, the ambassador declared that the Japanese government wished to have a trade treaty³ with the USSR. On a broader plane, Togo said, the Japanese government wanted an improvement of its relations with the USSR in general.

The Japanese received a reply on the following day: the USSR wanted a cessation of hostilities. The Soviet government deemed it expedient to set up the suggested commission.⁴ Moreover, it agreed that a commission should be formed to settle conflicts and suggested restoring in the Khalkhin-Gol area the situation that existed before the conflict, in other words, to leave the old frontier between Mongolia and Manchoukuo unchanged and to withdraw troops from that frontier. Further, it was stated that the USSR was prepared to sign a trade treaty with Japan.⁵

But in Tokyo they did not accept the suggestion for restoring the former frontier in the Khalkhin-Gol area and for the simul-

¹ *A History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1960, p. 244.

² M. S. Kapitsa, V. I. Ivanenko, *Friendship Won in Struggle (Soviet-Mongolian Relations)*, Moscow, 1965, p. 102 (in Russian).

³ L. N. Kutakov, *A History of Soviet-Japanese Diplomatic Relations*, Moscow, 1962, p. 231 (in Russian).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

taneous withdrawal of Soviet-Mongolian and Japanese-Manchurian troops from the frontier. Japan proposed that the Japanese-Manchurian and Soviet-Mongolian troops should remain along the line held by them on September 15, 1939. In order to get the conflict settled the Soviet government accepted this proposal. Troops thus remained on the lines held by them at 13.00 hours Moscow time on September 15. An understanding was reached on the formation of a mixed commission to define the frontier between Mongolia and Manchoukuo in the recent war theatre.¹

The results of the conflict and its settlement were a major military and political victory of the USSR and the MPR not only in the Far East but also on a broader plane. The rebuff to the Japanese imperialists testified to the USSR's contribution to the struggle against aggression, its readiness to defend friends, and its utter devotion to its internationalist duty. "The durability and strength of Mongolian-Soviet friendship," said Yumjagiyn Tsendenbal, "have been tested time and again by our enemies, an example being the heavy fighting in the Khalkhin-Gol area. In keeping with the principles of proletarian internationalism and discharging its internationalist duty, the Soviet Union helped the Mongolian people with its armed forces against Japanese aggression and thereby saved the freedom and independence of our country and contributed towards strengthening the anti-imperialist forces in the Far East."²

The Khalkhin-Gol victory spelled, in fact, military assistance to China in its war against the Japanese invaders. Moreover, it contributed to ending the Munich policy of the Western powers in Asia, chiefly the attempts Britain and the USA were making to precipitate a major war between the USSR and Japan.

As regards Japan itself, the defeat seriously affected its expansionist plans and was a big factor restraining Tokyo's anti-Soviet aspirations both in the early period of the Second World War and subsequently.

In September 1939 Prince Fumimaro Konoye admitted to the German ambassador in Tokyo Eugen Ott: "It will take Japan

another two years to reach the technical level as well as that of armaments and mechanisation demonstrated by the Soviet Army in the fighting in the Khalkhin-Gol area."¹ This factor subsequently influenced Japanese evaluations of the prospects of the German-Soviet war, and these proved to be on the whole more realistic than the forecasts of, say, London and Washington. When information that Germany would attack the USSR reached Tokyo, the Japanese expressed doubts about the feasibility of the Nazi blitzkrieg strategy.

2. THE USSR AND JAPAN: NEGOTIATIONS, 1939-1940

SOVIET DIPLOMACY REBUFFS THE POLICY OF PRESSURE

Taking the outcome of the military conflicts with the Soviet Union in 1938-1939 into account, Tokyo saw that there was no alternative to conducting negotiations with the USSR on a number of disputed issues in the hope of getting some unilateral advantages. But Japanese diplomacy was double-dealing, reflecting the political in-fighting in Japan's ruling quarters. A dispatch from the German ambassador Eugen Ott of September 8, 1939, to the German Foreign Ministry gave the following assessment of the alignment of the internal forces in Japan on basic international issues: "Japan's main aim is necessarily an early conclusion of the China conflict... The old supporters of a policy oriented toward Germany, especially in the Army, therefore see the possibility of further cooperation against England if we can dissuade the Soviet Union from supporting Chiang Kai-shek... Recognition of the British as the common enemy is growing in military and activist circles... The Government is determined to continue its China policy without consideration for England and is hoping soon to force the troops of the warring powers out of the settlements... The forces hostile to England are increasingly opposed by business circles, which expect a tremendous increase in exports to Anglo-Saxon countries as a result of the European conflict." Further Ott wrote that the interests of two economic

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, pp. 461-62 (in Russian).

² *Pravda*, May 16, 1957.

¹ Quoted from *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 182.

groups had come into collision in Japan. One was interested chiefly in plundering China and other Far Eastern nations, the other wanted to take advantage of the military situation in Europe to make super-profits by selling the belligerents raw materials, armaments, ammunition, food, and other items.¹

Seeing the need to prevent any exacerbation of relations with Japan and to restrain aggressive ambitions in Tokyo, the USSR displayed a readiness for a broad dialogue with Japan covering trade, economic and political problems. Parallel with resuming talks with the USSR, the Japanese leaders began sounding Soviet intentions with the assistance of German diplomats in order to bring pressure to bear on the USSR by joint efforts. The German ambassador wasted no time. When the newly-appointed Soviet ambassador in Tokyo K.A. Smetanin paid a protocol visit to the German embassy soon after his arrival, Eugen Ott took the earliest opportunity to say that Japanese military circles had changed their attitude to the USSR and were now interested in settling all outstanding issues and signing a trade treaty as soon as possible. Ott ended with the assertion that Japan's military circles wished to have a non-aggression pact with the USSR.²

Meeting with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR on October 4, 1939, the Japanese ambassador in Moscow Shigenori Togo said that since the USSR had agreed to sign a trade treaty he was authorised to submit a draft. He declared that agreement should be reached in principle and that the details could be discussed in Tokyo with the Soviet ambassador. The Japanese proposals provided for most-favoured nations status relative to customs tariffs on exports and imports.³

On November 13, 1939, Shigenori Togo forwarded to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs a declaration listing the points which Japan believed could be discussed. It envisaged the signing of a fishing convention and a trade treaty, and the setting up of a commission to define frontiers and settle conflicts. Appended to the declaration were draft proposals for forming commissions to settle and prevent conflicts between the

USSR and Manchoukuo and between Mongolia and Manchoukuo, and also draft proposals for a frontier demarcation commission.

Two days later the Japanese Foreign Minister Kichisaburo Nomura handed K. A. Smetanin the draft of an agreement on the functions of frontier commissions, the formation of which was envisaged in the agreement ending the conflict in the Khalkhin-Gol area, and the draft of a fishing convention. Nomura declared that the Japanese government wished to begin talks on a long-term (eight-year) fishing convention. Further, he said, Tokyo was interested in "actively facilitating the settlement of the question of payments for the East China Railway" and requested the ambassador to convey to Moscow the Japanese government's desire to speed up the talks on a trade treaty.¹

On November 19, 1939, agreement was reached on the composition, functions, and venue of a mixed commission for defining the frontier between Mongolia and Manchoukuo in the Khalkhin-Gol area. According to the agreement, the mixed commission would begin its work in Chita, and the second half of its sittings would take place in Harbin. On the same day the Japanese ambassador was handed the following statement of the Soviet government on the question of concluding a trade treaty:

"The government of the USSR expresses confidence that the treaty or interim agreement on trade and navigation will be based on the settlement of the misunderstanding between Japanese firms and Soviet organisations on the fulfilment of contracts placed by the Soviet side. The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs states that the Soviet government is prepared forthwith to begin trade talks in Moscow."²

On December 1, 1939, Togo handed Molotov a memorandum of the Japanese government on the question of fishing. "In and outside Japan," the ambassador said, "the fishing question has always been regarded as an indicator of the relations between Japan and the USSR. Since Japan wants to improve the relations between the two countries, it naturally desires the earliest possible settlement of the fishing questions." Togo read out the memorandum: "The draft fishing convention, finally agreed upon

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, United States Government Office, Washington, 1954, pp. 28-29.

² L. N. Kutakov, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

on November 9, 1936... envisages leaving in force the fishing convention signed by Japan and the USSR in 1928, as well as all the documents appended to it, for the term of eight years, counting from January 1, 1937. Above all, this draft recognises the stabilisation, for the same period, of the main part of the fishing sectors leased to Japanese subjects and, on the other hand, placing at the disposal of the Soviet state industry the sectors with catches of up to five million poods...¹ This draft convention was drawn up on the basis of the aforementioned 1936 draft convention, but inasmuch as three years have elapsed since it was finally agreed upon it includes amendments taking into account the state of the fishing sectors during this period."²

The submitted document was based on the Japanese 1936 draft that had been declined by the Soviet Union. The Soviet government had no intention of reconsidering its stand. Another point that had to be taken into consideration was that Manchoukuo, which was totally dependent on Japan, had not paid the last instalment for the East China Railway. As in 1938, the USSR did not intend to sign a fishing convention until the Japanese government honoured its guarantees relative to the payment for the East China Railway. On December 15, 1939, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR told the Japanese ambassador that the Soviet government did not consider it could conclude a fishing convention on the terms proposed by Japan. However, it was prepared to negotiate a long-term fishing convention on acceptable terms. To this end the Japanese government had at least to honour its guarantees regarding payment for the East China Railway³ that was to be made in March 1938. "If the Japanese government understands our point of view—well and good, if not, is its business,"⁴ the People's Commissar said, ending the talk.

Subsequent developments showed that the firm stand taken by Soviet diplomacy and also the need to reckon with the interests of Japanese business circles, who were insisting on the settlement of the question of fishing in Soviet waters, compelled the Japanese government to give in. However, having promised

¹ One pood = 16 kilos.—*Tr.*

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

to settle the question of the last instalment for the East China Railway, Tokyo stalled. In this connection the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR declared it regretted that the Japanese government was delaying payment of the instalment for the East China Railway as a result of which the talks on a fishing convention were postponed for a long time.¹

On December 27, 1939, a Soviet draft protocol on the question of a fishing convention, was handed to Togo. Its Article 1 stated: "The fishing convention between Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as all the accompanying documents that were signed on January 23, 1928, will remain in force until December 31, 1940." The Soviet Union proposed that this protocol should later be replaced by a new convention which was being negotiated.²

Tokyo accepted the Soviet draft, making an amendment about the instalment for the East China Railway. "The government of Manchoukuo," the Japanese ambassador said, "is prepared to pay the instalment of the East China Railway even on the day following the signing of the agreement provided the exact amount it must pay the Soviet government is specified. But it has a wish regarding the way of payment, and it is that after this instalment is paid the USSR should use that sum to purchase goods of Japanese and Manchurian manufacture." Regarding the interim fishing agreement Togo declared that he considered the draft protocol to be accepted and requested to specify the points that should be left in the exchange of notes.³

The Japanese side received the reply on the same day:

"1. The Soviet government agrees to purchase goods of Japanese and Manchurian manufacture to the amount of two-thirds of the last instalment for the East China Railway.

"2. So as not to delay the signing of the protocol prolonging the fishing convention for 1940 we do not object to accepting Article 2 of the said protocol without amendments."

The Japanese ambassador suggested recording that not less than two-thirds of the sum would be spent on the purchase of goods of Japanese and Manchurian manufacture. This, he ex-

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

plained, would make it easier for him to secure payment of the interest on the entire sum of the overdue instalment. The Soviet government gave its consent.¹

Both agreements—on the East China Railway and on prolonging the fishing convention—were signed on December 31, 1939.² The Soviet government and public opinion, the newspaper *Izvestia* wrote, attached great significance to the normalisation of Soviet-Japanese relations and were prepared to contribute to this normalisation.³

The settlement of the question of paying the last instalment for the East China Railway cleared the way for a new long-term fishing convention. However, the further successful course of the talks was impeded by Japanese procrastination over the definition of the Mongolian-Manchurian frontier in the Khalkhin-Gol area. The mixed commission, consisting of representatives of a Soviet-Mongolian, and a Japanese-Manchoukuo delegations, began its work in Chita on December 7, 1939. There were altogether 16 sittings: from December 7 to 25, 1939, in Chita and from January 7 to 30, 1940, in Harbin. The views of the sides were totally antipodal.⁴ In this situation the Soviet government did not deem it possible to go on negotiating a new fishing convention as long as the question of the frontier between Mongolia and Manchoukuo in the area of the recent hostilities was not settled. The impression was created that the unsettled state of the frontier issues was needed by Japan largely to show the ruling quarters in the USA that it was not striving to normalise relations with the USSR.

Having made significant headway in settling some problems in its relations with Japan, the Soviet Union pressed forward against Japanese procrastination in order to create a new political foundation for these relations. There was a favourable response to this from Japanese business circles interested in developing trade and economic relations with the USSR. The firm stand taken by the Soviet Union towards the talks on prolonging the fishing agreement and on the question of the East China Railway duly impressed the Japanese. Japan's political and mili-

tary leaders continued to be deterred by the defeat suffered by the Japanese armed forces on the Khalkhin-Gol and also by the success of Soviet foreign policy actions in Europe. These developments prompted an official of the Japanese embassy in Moscow to write: "It is quite absurd to believe that Russia will fall apart as soon as war breaks out. Russia with its enormous territory, vast resources, and large population will not suffer defeat so easily."⁵

Some Japanese political leaders were getting to realise that little could be won from the USSR with threat and pressure. In a talk with the Soviet ambassador in Tokyo K.A. Smetanin on January 19, 1940, the new Japanese Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita² noted that "lately relations between the USSR and Japan have begun to improve and I am happy to help to improve them further". Two weeks later Arita felt he again had to stress that "the atmosphere in the relations between the two countries has changed".³ In early 1940 Arita declared in the Diet that Japan intended to secure the settlement of key outstanding issues between it and the USSR.⁴ Interest in the development of trade and economic relations with the USSR grew in Japanese business circles. Vice Admiral Saionji, President of the oil concession in North Sakhalin, said during a visit to the Soviet ambassador on February 5, 1940, that he was confident there could be understanding and friendly relations between Japan and the USSR.⁵

Notwithstanding its statements about wanting to improve relations with the USSR, Tokyo was in no hurry to tackle the settlement of unresolved problems or abide fully by the understandings that had been reached. On February 28, 1940, the Soviet ambassador in Tokyo called on the Japanese Foreign Minister to protest against breaches of the agreement of December 31, 1939, by the Japanese government. He cited, among other things, the following facts: 1) The Commerce Department had delayed issuing permission to firms to meet contracts from the

¹ Quoted from *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 172.

² After less than five months in office the Nobuyuki Abe cabinet resigned on January 14, 1940. Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai became the new Prime Minister with Hachiro Arita as Foreign Minister.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

⁴ *Izvestia*, February 2, 1940.

⁵ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy. A Collection of Documents*, Vol. 4, pp. 477-79.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 480-81.

⁴ *Soviet-Mongolian Relations, 1921-1974*, Vol. 1, p. 557.

Soviet trade mission on account of the payments for the East China Railway; 2) in spite of a prior understanding the Chosen Bank had refused to transfer one-third of the payments for the East China Railway to the State Bank of the USSR; 3) the question of the Matsuo Dockyard meeting its commitments had not been settled.¹

This firm Soviet stand compelled Tokyo to modify its attitude at the Soviet-Japanese talks on defining the frontier between Mongolia and Manchoukuo in the region of the conflict on the Khalkhin-Gol. These culminated on June 9, 1940, in an agreement that determined the frontier line in that region.²

The talks on a new fishing convention, in which Japanese businessmen were particularly interested, were resumed in mid-1940. Japan continued to insist on a prolongation of the 1928 convention for ten years without any modification. On June 20, 1940, the Soviet government declared that some alterations arising from the changes which had taken place had to be introduced into the convention. It believed that the convention had to be based on the principle that fishing grounds would be leased to Japanese subjects by auction. It considered that leasing fishing grounds without auction was unacceptable, but Japan insisted on its own proposals. The talks were unproductive.

POLITICAL FOUNDATION OF SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS

In early July 1940 the Japanese ambassador in Moscow suggested that talks should be started on a Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact. The Japanese felt that it should be founded on the 1925 Peking Convention, which was in turn based on the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty, signed after Japan's perfidious attack on Russia, and contained a number of provisions that gave Japan unilateral advantages. In particular, the Peking Convention left in force the territorial provisions of the Portsmouth Treaty, which gave Japan South Sakhalin, a primordial Russian territory in the Far East. When the Soviet government signed this convention in 1925 it declared that it did not share with the former tsarist government the political responsibility for concluding the

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Izvestia*, June 10, 1940.

Portsmouth Treaty. It was thus quite plain that in Tokyo they wanted to obtain a unilateral benefit in determining a new political foundation for Japanese-Soviet relations, to retain the discriminatory provisions of past years.

Nevertheless the Soviet government agreed to begin talks on a neutrality pact, seeing the very fact of such talks as a major step towards strengthening peace along the Soviet Union's Far Eastern frontiers. It also offered to begin talks on abolishing the concessions in North Sakhalin.¹ Togo recommended that his government should accept this Soviet offer. Scheduled to begin in the summer of 1940 the talks were postponed by Japan—in Tokyo it was decided to wait for a clarification of the developments in Western Europe.

After Germany's military successes in Europe in the summer of 1940 it became more imperative than ever for the USSR to ensure its security in the Far East. Considerable attention was given to this region in the Soviet government's report to the seventh session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR held in early August 1940. "It can be recognised," V. M. Molotov said, "that by and large there are some signs of Japan's desire to improve relations with the Soviet Union. . ."² The report stressed that in the world, including the Far East, the situation remained explosive. As regards Japan, its "imperialist appetite is growing."³

The new military-political alignment of forces in Europe was conducive to activating Japan's policy. There was a revival of hopes in US ruling quarters that Japanese expansion could be steered northward. At the end of July 1940 the Japanese government adopted a "programme of measures conforming to the changes in the international situation". This programme envisaged Japanese political hegemony in the South Seas and the building, on that basis, of a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Moreover, it provided for strengthening links with Germany and Italy and concluding a military alliance with them. Relative to the USSR, the task was set of speedily regulating relations with it.⁴

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives.*

² *Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. August 1-August 7, 1940 Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 30 (in Russian).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴ *A History of the War in the Pacific*, Vol. 3, p. 67.

Soviet diplomacy saw as alarming Japan's heightened activity in a bid to strengthen cooperation with Germany and Italy. Nazi diplomacy, for its part, was increasingly pushing towards a further consolidation of the fascist group of imperialist states. Berlin instructed its ambassador in Tokyo Eugen Ott to impress upon the Japanese government that Japan should be interested in strengthening Germany. In a telegramme of September 9, 1940, Ott informed Ribbentrop of the predominant Japanese assessments of the international situation and of the prospects for Japan's foreign policy. The ruling quarters in Japan, Ott wrote became convinced that although Germany had signed a non-aggression pact with the USSR, it had not changed its unfriendly attitude towards the USSR and continued to be well disposed to the Anti-Comintern Pact and to the idea of a tripartite alliance. In other words, having started practical preparations for a war against the USSR, Nazi Germany once more changed its tactics and began to solicit Japanese support for these preparations.

In July 1940, preparing to sign the tripartite pact, the Nazi and Japanese representatives drew up a preliminary document setting forth the basic commitments of the sides and speaking of greater harmony between Japan, Germany, and Italy. Under this pact Japan stipulated "special rights" for itself as an Asian power situated far from the western and African fronts but having the decisive role to play in establishing a "new order" in Asia. Its European allies were to extend their utmost assistance to it. The posture adopted by the Japanese government was eloquent evidence of the growth of expansionist ambitions among Japan's ruling classes. The Japanese ambassador to the USSR Togo subsequently wrote in his memoirs that upon his return home from Moscow he was astounded by the enhanced influence in Japan of those who were pinning their hopes on the Tripartite Pact.¹

In their official statements Japan's political leaders claimed the Tripartite Pact was a vehicle facilitating the regulation of Soviet-Japanese relations. To substantiate this claim they referred to Article 5, which stated that the terms of the pact "do

¹ Shigenori Togo, *The Cause of Japan*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1956, pp. 46-48.

not in any way affect the political status which exists at present between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia."² But it is no secret that this article was included in the pact to camouflage its anti-Soviet thrust. The truth was that Japan's ruling quarters hoped to use this pact with the express purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the USSR. At the sitting of the Privy Council's committee of inquiry on September 2, 1940, the Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka said that "Japan will help Germany in the event of a Soviet-German war."³

Japanese trade and industrial circles associated with fishing in the Northwestern Pacific and with coal and oil concessions in North Sakhalin hoped to use the Soviet Union's desire for better relations with Japan to obtain concessions in the economic sphere and try to purchase North Sakhalin. In the last resort it was planned to obtain larger concessions in North Sakhalin.

On October 30, 1940, the Japanese government proposed the signing of what was in effect a non-aggression rather than a neutrality pact. It also suggested postponing the settlement of all disputed issues between the USSR and Japan until after the pact was signed. This was unacceptable to the Soviet government.

3. SOVIET-JAPANESE NEUTRALITY PACT

After the Molotov visit to Berlin in November 1940 had brought to light the entire magnitude of the contradictions between the USSR and Nazi Germany, it became more imperative than ever for the Soviet Union to prevent its international isolation and a simultaneous attack by Nazi Germany and militarist Japan.

On November 18, 1940, the Soviet government presented to Japan its own draft of a neutrality pact. In Moscow it was seen that this pact could be signed in parallel with the settlement of major issues of Soviet-Japanese relations. The USSR proposed that the pact should be signed concurrently with the abolition of Japanese coal and oil concessions in North Sakhalin. It of-

² *Documents of German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. XI, 1960, p. 205.

³ L. N. Kutakov, op. cit., p. 273.

ferred guarantees that for five years Japan would receive 100,000 tons of Sakhalin oil annually on the usual commercial terms.¹

Japan turned this down. From Tokyo there came a counter-offer to buy North Sakhalin in order "finally" to settle disputed issues between Japan and the USSR. Japanese diplomacy was, in relation to Sakhalin, trying to get what it failed to get at Portsmouth in 1905 after tsarist Russia's military defeat. The Soviet government declared flatly that this Japanese offer was unacceptable.

Confronted with this firmness, the Japanese government beat a retreat. Moreover, it waived its demand for a new fishing convention based on the terms of the 1928 convention, and stated that it was prepared to sign an interim agreement for 1941 on the pattern of the 1940 agreement. As a result, on January 20, 1941, the Soviet Union and Japan signed an agreement prolonging the former fishing convention to the end of the year and on the formation of a Soviet-Japanese commission to draw up a new fishing convention.² This positive consummation of the economic talks between the USSR and Japan improved the possibilities for resuming exchanges of views about a Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact. Acting on Matsuoka's recommendation, on February 3, 1941, the Japanese government endorsed a foreign policy programme under the heading "Principles for Conducting Negotiations with Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union."³ On February 11, 1941, Matsuoka informed the Soviet ambassador that he was going to Berlin on the invitation of the German government and could stop over at Moscow. The Soviet government agreed to receive him.

On March 26 Matsuoka left for Berlin where he had a series of talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop. One of the cardinal subjects of these talks was the question of Soviet-German relations and the stand Japan would take in the event Germany went to war against the USSR. Ribbentrop told the Japanese Foreign Minister: "If one fine day the Soviet Union takes a stand that will be considered menacing by Germany the Führer will crush Russia." Paul Schmidt, the interpreter at these talks, recalls that

¹ *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1980*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1980, p. 415.

² *Izvestia*, January 21, 1941.

³ *A History of the War in the Pacific*, Vol. 3, pp. 211-12.

"at these words Matsuoka, who had hitherto sat impassively, blinked in surprise". In parting Hitler said to Matsuoka: "When you return to Japan you will no longer be able to report to your Emperor that a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union is ruled out."¹ Matsuoka assured him that "Japan would always be a faithful ally" of Germany.²

In Tokyo they understood that the world war would enter a new stage with nazi Germany's attack on the USSR. Banking on the Third Reich's victory in advance, the ruling quarters in Japan feared they would be late for the division of Soviet territory. But to plunge into war forthwith on Germany's side seemed to them to be less attractive than expansion southward. Further, Tokyo did not rule out the possibility that a Soviet-German war would draw the USSR, Britain, and the USA closer together on an anti-German basis. In this case, by subsequently beginning a war with Britain and the USA for "southern territories" Japan would have in the north the USSR linked to these Western powers by common interests. This situation was taken into account by the Soviet government which emphatically rejected Japan's unfounded claims. This calculation was correct—Tokyo renounced the discriminatory provisions of its variant of a neutrality pact. The talks were resumed.

Matsuoka arrived in Moscow on April 7, 1941. He began with repeating the Japanese offer, already rejected by the USSR, to purchase North Sakhalin. In exchange Japan would be prepared to substitute other agreements for the Portsmouth Treaty and the Peking Convention and to renounce some of their "fishing rights". The Soviet government rejected this offer point blank. Until the last moment—until the day of his departure from Moscow—Matsuoka refused to budge on the question of abolishing the Japanese concessions in North Sakhalin.

In a talk with J. V. Stalin, the Japanese Foreign Minister tried, as he himself writes, to explain the meaning of "hakko ichiu" ("eight corners under one roof", which spelled the unification of the whole of Asia under the aegis of Japan). Stalin

¹ Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, 1923-1945*, Athenäum-Verlag, Bonn, 1958, pp. 531, 537.

² M. Y. Raginsky, S. Y. Rozenblit, op. cit., p. 255.

ignored the profusion of words that were designed to divert the talk from the main thing. Then the Japanese Foreign Minister raised the question of Sakhalin. It was clearly intimated to him that this matter was not subject to discussion. Nor was any impression made by his provocative suggestion, borrowed from the nazi "arguments" at the Berlin talks in November 1940, that the Soviet Union should "move in the direction of India and Iran". Matsuoka gave in.

The USSR and Japan signed a neutrality pact in Moscow on April 13, 1941. The sides agreed "to maintain peaceful and friendly relations and mutually respect each other's territorial integrity and inviolability". The pact stated that should one of the Contracting Parties "become the object of hostilities on the part of one or several third powers, the other Contracting Party will observe neutrality throughout the duration of the conflict."¹ The pact was concluded for five years. In the appended Declaration the USSR undertook to "respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of Manchoukuo". For its part, "Japan gave a similar pledge with regard to the Mongolian People's Republic."²

In addition to signing the neutrality pact, Matsuoka made a promise that the question of abolishing the Japanese concessions in North Sakhalin would be settled within a few months. This was reiterated by Japan on May 31, 1941, in a new statement forwarded to the Soviet government through the Japanese ambassador in Moscow Yoshitsugu Tatekawa. In this statement Japan undertook to settle the question of abolishing concessions not later than within six months after the signing of the neutrality pact.

This pact was a heavy blow to the plans of the nazis, who were speeding up their preparations for an attack on the USSR. It can be said that this pact had the same effect on Germany as the Soviet-German non-aggression pact had had on Japan eighteen months earlier—it undermined unity among the aggressor powers relative to the USSR.

The pact caused confusion also in Washington. In order to save appearances, Secretary of State Cordell Hull told pressmen on April 14, 1941 that the pact had not come as a surprise

¹ *History of Soviet Foreign Policy. 1917-1945*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 418.

² *Ibid.*

although there had been doubts about whether Japan and the USSR would agree to record the existing situation in a document. US policy, he said, would remain unchanged.¹ Despite the attempts of US officials to belittle the pact's significance, some newspapers wrote that it meant a "diplomatic setback for the USA". The US press agreed that by this act the USSR had ensured its flank in the Far East and won freedom of action along its western frontiers.

The neutrality pact put paid to the "Far Eastern Munich" policy that had been threatening the interests of the USSR as well as of China and other Asian countries. In February-March 1941 talks began in Washington between the Japanese ambassador to the USA Kichisaburo Nomura and the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull, both of whom focussed on a division of spheres of influence between the USA and Japan in China and the Pacific. Further, they discussed questions pertaining to a "joint defence against communism". The imperialists of the USA and Japan failed to find a common language chiefly because each felt the other's appetite was much too big.

Sober-minded Western diplomats held that the Japanese-Soviet neutrality pact would help to stabilise the situation in the Far East. On June 5, 1941, the US ambassador in Moscow Laurence A. Steinhardt said to S.A. Lozovsky, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, that he did not think the neutrality pact between the USSR and Japan was aimed against the USA. Actually, this pact was one more step towards the preservation of peace in the Pacific. To those who asserted that the Soviet-Japanese pact imperilled the United States, he replied that the Soviet Union had a dangerous neighbour in the west and wanted to ensure peace in the east. He personally would have acted exactly in the same way.² The British Ambassador in Moscow Sir Stafford Cripps regarded the neutrality pact "as anti-German since its only object can be to protect the Russian Eastern frontiers in the event of an attack on the west by Germany."³

However, for all its significance as a factor strengthening the

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ E. Estorick, *Stafford Cripps: Master Statesman*, The John Day Company, New York, 1949, p. 240.

Soviet Union's security, the neutrality pact with Japan did not mean the total elimination of the threat of Japanese aggression. Just as with regard to Germany following the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, the Soviet government did not relax its vigilance in the Far East. This vigilance was absolutely justified—vacillation over the final choice of the direction for further Japanese aggression continued in Tokyo until August 1941. When it became quite obvious that Germany's Barbarossa plan had failed, Japan's leaders decided to switch their attention to expansion southward. The transfer of some of the Kwantung Army's large air units and also units of Japanese ground forces from North China to the south was started only in September 1941.¹

Soviet policy towards militarist Japan in 1939-1941 cooled the ardour of the proponents of northward expansion among the rulers of Japan. Now, more than ever, in Japan they realised that there was no easy road for Japan in the north. As a result Japan's rulers had largely to revise their "Northern" ambitions and wait for a more propitious time to realise them. They remained in this state of expectation practically throughout the duration of the Second World War. The actions taken by Soviet diplomacy in the Far East tangibly helped to strengthen the USSR's security in the face of the mounting threat from Nazi Germany, and contributed to the preservation of peace in the Far East. Nothing came of the attempts of the Western powers, notably of the USA, to bring about a clash between the USSR and Japan. Japan did not join Nazi Germany in attacking the USSR.

4. SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE

In September 1939, when the world war was already raging in Europe, freight continued to flow uninterruptedly from the Soviet Union to China—along the northwestern highway from Alma-Ata across Xinjiang to Lanzhou. This road had been built practically anew with Soviet assistance; it was completed in the summer of 1939. This route was a key artery nourishing Chinese resistance to the Japanese invaders. There were no

¹ V. I. Chukov, "Mission in China", *Novy mir*, No. 12, 1979, pp. 218-22.

other reliable roads: the Japanese navy was blockading the country's coast, while British and French authorities were obstructing the transportation of freight from the USSR.

AID TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE WAS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE FOR THE USSR

During the initial period of the Second World War the USSR continued to extend considerable military, financial, and other material assistance to the Chinese people in their struggle against Japanese militarism. This was the determining factor for the development of Soviet-Chinese relations.

"Ever since Japan invaded China," the Chinese ambassador in Moscow Yang Zc said in a talk with V.M. Molotov on September 10, 1939, "the Chinese government has been getting its greatest assistance, moral and material, from the Soviet Union. Besides, China has been getting some aid from other countries. There are rumours that Japan wants to improve its relations with Britain, the USA, and France, and this may negatively affect China for these countries will stop to supply what little materials they have been supplying."

"We have been helping China," Molotov replied, "and will go on doing so. For our own security we are taking serious steps, but aid to China will, as before, continue."¹ None other than Mao Zedong acknowledged at the time that following the outbreak of the war between China and the Japanese invaders no imperialist state extended real assistance to the Chinese people, and that the Soviet Union was the only country that helped them with military aircraft and material resources.²

The Soviet Union pursued its principled line of helping the people of China in the war against Japan in the context of a complex military-political situation in China itself. In Chongqing the Kuomintang government headed by Chiang Kai-shek presumed that Germany and Japan would inevitably attack the USSR. This, it believed, would be a very favourable development as it would divert Japan from continuing the war in China and permit the Kuomintang to use all its forces against the Chi-

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² Mao Zedong, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1953, Vol. 3, p. 190 (Russian translation).

nese Communists. For that reason, while it accepted assistance from the Soviet Union, the Chongqing government sought to aggravate Soviet-Japanese relations. Active, sustained resistance to the Japanese invaders did not enter into Chiang Kai-shek's plans.

The anti-communism of the Kuomintang leaders was taken into account in Tokyo. It is therefore not accidental that even cooperation with China on an anti-Soviet basis was not ruled out by Japanese military and political planners. Professor of History Akira Iriye of the University of Rochester, USA, who reviewed Japanese publications on the Second World War, notably the seven-volume *The Road to the Pacific War: A Diplomatic History Before the War*, writes that the authors conclusively showed that militarist Japan nurtured aggressive intentions towards the Soviet Union. His analysis of documents of Japan's military leaders brought him round to the conclusion that in Tokyo the possibility was studied of "cooperating with China against the Soviet Union."¹

Towards the close of 1940 the war acquired the character of a protracted conflict. The Japanese occupation of a large part of China was exhausting the country. The nature of the situation in China, which was exercising no little influence on international politics in East Asia, was duly assessed by the Soviet leadership. They realised that the Kuomintang government was pursuing a double-faced policy: taking part, albeit inconsistently, in the united anti-Japanese front of China's socio-political forces and, at the same time, fighting against these forces. For that reason Soviet assistance to the Chongqing government was commensurate with the extent to which the government reflected the interests of the Chinese people. Moscow held that in the final analysis this was assistance not to the government but to the Chinese people, who were fighting for their independence.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR CHINA

Soviet assistance was of tremendous importance to China in view of the difficult situation in which that country had found itself. The centuries-old backwardness, the perennial hunger of

¹ *The Origins of the Second World War*, edited by E. M. Robertson. Macmillan and Co. Ltd., New York, 1971, p. 232.

hundreds of millions of people, and the primitive agriculture were aggravated by what the war with Japan had brought the Chinese people. China lost its main industrial centres and key transport arteries, and the economic links between individual regions were disrupted. In 1941, when the level of industrial output reached its peak compared with previous years, the unoccupied regions produced 4,400 tons of pig iron and only 116 tons of steel.¹ The Chinese army was conformably equipped. Suffice it to note that during the war the Japanese army had between four and five times the fire power of the Chinese, 13 times more aircraft, and 36 times more tanks.² There was no war industry in China to speak of.

Of all the military hardware sent to China by the Soviet Union, aircraft were the most important. The nation's skies were virtually open for the aggressor—prior to the war with Japan the Chinese air force had not more than 150 combat aircraft.³ A large part of these had been destroyed by the Japanese by the close of 1937. The remnants avoided the enemy in order to save the planes.⁴

Soviet aid drastically changed the situation. In 1937-1941 China was given 1,250 aircraft.⁵ Beginning with February 1938 Soviet volunteer airmen fought in China. After the very first battles involving Soviet volunteers the Chinese command decided that it could do without the services of foreign mercenaries—the squadron manned by them was disbanded.

The effective actions of the Soviet volunteers enabled the Chinese command to step up the war in the air. As a result, the Japanese had to move the bases of their bomber aircraft, which had formerly been sited at airfields 50 kilometres from the front, to a distance of between 500 and 600 kilometres. But this did

¹ *A History of China's Economic Development, 1840-1948. Statistics*, Moscow, 1958, p. 156 (in Russian).

² B. A. Borodin, *Soviet Assistance to the Chinese People in the War Against Japan, 1937-1941*, Moscow, 1963, p. 146 (in Russian).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴ G. Bertram, *On the Fronts of North China*, Moscow, 1940, p. 282 (Russian translation).

⁵ *In Chinese Skies, 1937-1940, Reminiscences of Soviet Volunteer Airmen*, Moscow, 1980, p. 7 (in Russian).

not help. In early autumn 1939 a Soviet volunteer squadron of long-distance heavy bombers made two raids on Hankou, the principal Japanese air base in China. More than a hundred Japanese aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Prior to these raids Soviet airmen had participated in major air operations such as the bombing of Japanese air bases on Taiwan and a raid on Japan during which a million anti-war leaflets were dropped. Fighter planes fought innumerable air battles.

More than 200 Soviet airmen were killed in the battles for the just cause of the Chinese people.

China was supplied with small arms, cannon, mortars, armoured vehicles, aircraft, ammunition and fuel. In 1939 Soviet credits to China totalled 250 million dollars.¹ This was over eight times more than the sum of the loan granted to China by the USA in 1939; British credits did not exceed three million pounds. But even these small credits from the Western powers were granted at an annual interest of 4-6.5 per cent provided they were repaid with scarce strategic materials. Soviet aid was of an entirely different character: the interest rate did not exceed 3 per cent and the credits were chiefly repaid with farm produce. In the Western countries China had to pay for armaments in hard cash. The Soviet Union supplied weapons as part of its credits.²

Soviet military advisers, who included K. M. Kachanov, V. I. Chuikov, P. I. Batov, M. I. Pankevich, and S. S. Ochnev, continued to render the Chinese people unstinted assistance. By the beginning of 1941 there were 140 Soviet advisers in China.³ Embodying in practice the traditions of proletarian internationalism, they helped the Chinese command to solve major operational problems and to train troops. They did not have an easy time—much of their advice was left unheeded by the Kuomintang military leadership and in many instances Kuomintang generals tried to limit their role, isolate them from the Chinese soldiers and population, attached intelligence agents to them, kept them under surveillance, and so on.

To some extent Soviet military and other material assistance to China restrained the reactionary aspirations of the Kuomin-

tang government. For example, by early 1940 it had become clear that the Kuomintang was moving towards a rupture with the anti-Japanese national front. It stopped supplies to the 8th and new 4th armies of the Communist Party of China and increased the armed attacks on these armies. The situation was such that Soviet aid was in danger of being used against the nation's progressive forces. The USSR could not permit this. The Soviet government declared that it would halt supplies of armaments if they were turned against the Chinese people. In the spring of 1940 talks were opened in Chongqing between representatives of the CPC and the Kuomintang on the restoration of the unity of action against the Japanese imperialists.¹

In imperialist Japan there was a sharply negative response to Soviet assistance to the national liberation struggle of the Chinese people. Until the close of 1941 China could, in the war with Japan, count on supplies of armaments only from the USSR, because its hopes for military assistance from the USA and Britain proved to be illusory. Contrary to the expectations of Japan's rulers, the neutrality pact with the USSR did not affect Soviet policy towards China. As the Soviet ambassador to China A.S. Panyushkin said to the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Chonghuo, the relations between the USSR and Japan could not under any circumstances negatively affect Soviet-Chinese relations.² In early 1941 when China was more acutely in need of aircraft than ever, the Soviet Union sent it 200 bombers and fighter planes. Soviet volunteer airmen fought in China right until the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War when they had to return to defend their own homeland.

The Soviet scholar B.A. Borodin justifiably writes: "There was not a single event in the life of the Chinese people that left the Soviet Union indifferent."³ Communiques from the fighting fronts, information about the life, struggle, and privations of the people of China, and pronouncements by Soviet Party and government leaders, publicists, and workers in culture and science in support of China's struggle for independence were highlighted by the Soviet press.

¹ Ibid., p. 177.

² M. S. Kapitsa, *Soviet-Chinese Relations*, Moscow, 1958, p. 299 (in Russian).

³ B. A. Borodin, op. cit., p. 128.

¹ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 173.

² B. A. Borodin, op. cit., pp. 146-51.

³ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 173.

Chapter 7 RELATIONS WITH GERMANY AND ITALY

1. LATENT CONFLICT WITH GERMANY DURING THE "PHONEY WAR" IN EUROPE

"The beginning of the war between Germany and Poland has powerfully affected public opinion here,"¹ the German ambassador in Moscow von Schulenburg reported to Berlin on September 6, 1939. It could not have been otherwise, for the war was now on the USSR's own doorstep. The non-aggression commitment determining Soviet-German relations was no guarantee against provocations and other acts by Germany to the detriment of Soviet interests. A war was gaining momentum, Germany's military machine was operating in high gear, and in this situation the Soviet leadership had to show the utmost vigilance and preparedness to respond to any complications. At the extraordinary fourth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at the close of August 1939 V. M. Molotov had stressed that the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty "cannot lull our vigilance".²

BEGINNING OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN MILITARY CONFRONTATION AND ANTI-HITLER ACTIONS BY THE USSR

The facts now available to historians confirm that the nazis could have been expected to launch large-scale anti-Soviet actions in September 1939. An example is the plan for a military-politi-

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1954, p. 13.

² *Extraordinary Fourth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, August 28-September 1, 1939. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1939, p. 205 (in Russian).

cal operation by the German military intelligence code-named the Canaris Plan after its chief. Preparations for this operation continued in spite of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact.

In substance, this operation was aimed at using the conditions created by the German-Polish war to orchestrate, with the involvement of anti-Soviet émigré organisations and groups in collaboration with the Wehrmacht, a "people's rising" in Eastern Poland and its subsequent spread to the Soviet Ukraine. The end purpose was to wrest a part of the Ukraine from the USSR. This operation had been prepared in the course of several years.

Back in 1937 the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Abwehr reached an agreement on collaboration in political subversion in the East. Subversive groups totalling 12,000 men trained at special camps were to enter the Western Ukraine together with German troops. Propaganda to the Western Ukraine was beamed by German transmitters in Vienna, Graz, and Leipzig. A headquarters headed by one of the OUN ringleaders Ryko Jary was set up to direct the "Ukrainian rising". The threads of the overall direction of the "rising" led to the subversion division of German military intelligence.

No order was issued after August 23, 1939, to countermand the Canaris Plan. On the contrary, after inspecting German units on the southern front in Poland the Abwehr chief Rear Admiral Canaris said at a conference on September 11, 1939: "If the Ukrainian rising were to be started now it would be directed against Poland and Russia." The headquarters of the German ground forces also demanded the commencement of the operation in the Ukraine. As the Soviet scholar L. A. Bezymensky writes, the course of events was as follows: "On September 12 Canaris urgently requested instructions from Keitel, who gave permission for subversive activity on behalf of the Wehrmacht High Command. This decision was approved by Hitler. On September 15 Canaris ordered the movement of the OUN units attached to List's¹. Everything was ready but early in the morning of September 17 he was informed that Red Army units had started a

¹ During the German-Polish war General Siegmund Wilhelm List was in command of the 14th Army, which advanced from Upper Silesia in the direction of Cracow.

liberation campaign to reunify Western lands with Byelorussia and the Ukraine. As one Abwehr officer wrote in his diary, it was 'the end of all hopes that had latterly blossomed so luxuriantly'.¹

In early September 1939 the troops of the Kiev and Byelorussian special military districts were alerted for combat and operations control headquarters were set up for the Ukrainian and Byelorussian fronts. At the same time, an exercise of reserves was conducted by a number of military districts. The Red Army's liberative operation in the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia was started at a time when the German forces had not only reached the Western Bug and San rivers but also crossed to their eastern banks in a number of places, entered the territory of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, and moved farther to the east. The Soviet government's determination to repulse the nazi invaders compelled restraint on the part of the German leaders.

The emergency steps taken by the USSR prevented any further deterioration of the strategic situation for the Soviet Union. Inaction by the USSR would have resulted in the appearance of the German armed forces in operational proximity of the USSR's vital centres. This was precisely the view of British political circles on the strategic aspects of the Soviet actions with regard to the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia. "But that the Russian armies should stand on this (Curzon.-P.S.) line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace. At any rate, the line is there, and an Eastern front has been created which Nazi Germany does not dare assail,"² Winston Churchill declared in a speech broadcast by British radio on October 1, 1939.

The tragedy that befell the Polish people showed what lay in store for the population of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia from September 1939. Speaking of the "new order" in the "Governorship-General" created by the nazis in occupied Poland, its head Hans Frank declared: "I received... an extraordinary order to ravage this region mercilessly as a territory

¹ L. Bezymensky, "On the Eve of the World War II. Behind the Scenes and in the Open", *New Times*, No. 33, 1979, p. 26.

² Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 1. Cassel and Co. Ltd., London, 1949, p. 403.

of war and as a trophy. I had to reduce this economic, social, cultural, and political structure to a heap of ruins."¹ A monstrous programme of genocide was started in the "Governorship-General" and in the Polish territories incorporated in Germany. For instance, nearly 3,500 Polish scientists and workers in culture and art were killed and higher and secondary schools closed during the "extraordinary pacification action" ("Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion") alone.² The Oswiecim (Auschwitz) death camp was set up on Polish soil in 1940.

The steps taken by the USSR relative to the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia were thus objectively an effective counter-measure to nazi aggression—a large territory of continental Europe was removed from the sphere of the imminent nazi occupation. For the first time since the nazis came to power in Germany and the non-stop implementation of their expansionist plans (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland), a powerful barrier was erected to these conquests. Yet there was no open confrontation with Germany. In the situation prevailing in September 1939 this required an accurate account of the balance of strength and wise statesmanship.

On September 28, 1939, Germany signed a treaty with the USSR that established a line of demarcation along the rivers Western Bug and Narev. This demarcation followed approximately the Curzon line proposed by Britain, France, and the USA in 1919 as a frontier based on ethnic principles. The demarcation along rivers was important in that it prevented direct contact between the Soviet Armed Forces and the German Wehrmacht. But none of this changed the crucial fact that from the latter half of September 1939 onward the Soviet Armed Forces were in confrontation with the armed forces of the strongest and most aggressive power of the imperialist camp.

Following the general political guideline laid down in Berlin, namely, to show restraint and so far avoid provoking the Soviet Union—the Germans desisted from exacerbating the situation. The Soviet Union replied in kind. "Our officers," V. I.

¹ Stanisław Piotrowski, *Dziennik Hansa Franka*. Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, Warsaw, 1956, p. 96.

² *Internationale Hefte der Widerstandsbewegung*, No. 8-10. March 1963. p. 109.

Chuikov recalls, "often had to go to the German headquarters to specify demarcation lines. They were received with respect, their objections were attentively examined and their demands, based on the agreement, were met. . . The German troops did not engage in provocations.

"Few of us believed the sincerity of their friendly effusions. We had faith in the wise policy pursued by our party and in our strength, showed restraint and, at the same time, lost no time to reinforce our defences against these questionable friends. None of us had any doubts that the non-aggression pact with Germany was temporary and forced."¹

Of the utmost significance was that the Communist Party and the Soviet government responded to the direct military confrontation with Germany with a large series of military and military-economic decisions during the first few months following the outbreak of the war. As early as September 1, 1939, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law on universal military conscription, which juridically formalised the switch of the Armed Forces to a cadre basis. The term of conscription for privates and non-commissioned officers of the ground and air forces was increased to three years, and in the navy—to five years. The deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces commenced in the autumn of 1939: tens of new divisions were formed. In September 1939 the Political Bureau of the Party's CC passed a decision to modernise existing and build new aircraft factories; the plan was to nearly double the capacity of the Soviet aircraft industry. In December 1939 the KV-1 heavy and T-34 medium tanks were adopted for service. These marked a qualitatively new stage in the development of world tank construction. The military-economic decisions adopted up to the close of 1939 ensured a more than 33 per cent growth of the Soviet defence industry's output in 1940.²

The Soviet Union's course towards a speedy reinforcement of its defence capacity in the face of the mounting threat from nazism refutes the legends about a "Soviet deal with Germany".

The Party's economic policy during these years was aimed

¹ V.I. Chuikov, "Mission in China", *Novy mir*, No. 11, 1979, p. 199.

² *A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Vol. 5, Book 1, Moscow, 1970, p. 120; *The Soviet Armed Forces. A History*, Moscow, 1978, pp. 226, 229-30, 234 (both in Russian).

at locating the productive forces more rationally, speeding up new construction programmes, and making the utmost use of the production capacity of each industrial enterprise. Thanks to the efforts of the Party and the working class in the years preceding the Great Patriotic War there was a substantial expansion of industry in the USSR. On the eve of the Great Patriotic War the Soviet Union had a large number of defence and other military-industrial facilities that during the war made it possible to start the mass production of tanks, aircraft, cannon ammunition, and other armaments.

Special importance was attached to the building of defence factories in the country's eastern regions. As a result, as early as 1940 these regions produced 28.9 per cent of the country's pig iron, 32.2 per cent of its steel, 35.9 per cent of its coal, 11.6 per cent of its oil, and most of its non-ferrous metals.¹

The Party substantially increased its attention to the development and manufacture of equipment and weapons for the Red Army on the eve of the war. The development of first-class tanks, aircraft, artillery systems, and other armaments was the result of the efforts of the entire defence industry personnel. After these armaments were tested and adopted for the Armed Forces, the Party and the government ordered their mass production. Such production of new armaments required an enormous expenditure of material and labour resources and the restructuring of technological processes. All this could be, and indeed was, done only beginning from 1941 because it was not possible to switch the entire economy to war production before the outbreak of war. It was important to create in peace-time the conditions under which, if war broke out, it would be possible to put the economy on a war-time footing and ensure the mass production of military hardware. The defence industry created in the pre-war years ensured an adequate supply of the Armed Forces with modern weapons. Nevertheless, while the defence industry's advances were unquestionable, there were serious shortcomings in its work.

The economic base, which became much stronger during the period the USSR was not involved in the world war, was the

¹ *A History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, *Beginning of the War. Preparations for Aggression Against the USSR*, Moscow, 1974, p. 380 (in Russian).

foundation of the Soviet Union's defence potential during the Great Patriotic War.

In the period of under two years that elapsed before the USSR was drawn into the Second World War the numerical strength of the Soviet Armed Forces was almost trebled: 125 new divisions were formed. A hundred new warships were commissioned within the short span of 11 months in 1940.

The naval units commissioned in the period between the beginning of 1939 and 1941 increased the Soviet navy's aggregate displacement by 107,718 tons for surface ships and by 50,385 tons for submarines. Another 269 modern vessels were under construction at the close of 1940. At its plenary meeting in March 1940 the Party's Central Committee made it incumbent upon the People's Commissariat for Defence to carry out a fundamental reorganisation of the system of training of army and navy personnel and to simulate real combat situations as closely as possible in all exercises.¹

STRAIN OF INVISIBLE DIPLOMATIC BATTLES

The non-aggression pact continued to determine the relations between the USSR and Germany. Germany was for the time being abiding by the terms of the pact and there were no grounds for freezing bilateral contacts. On September 28, 1939, the governments of the USSR and Germany exchanged letters on expanding trade between the two countries. These letters recorded the decision of the sides to draw up an economic programme of an increase of Soviet-German trade to the highest level reached in the past. The fact that there were no direct and open collisions between the two countries was increasingly used by Berlin as an indication of what it went so far as to term "friendly relations with the USSR". Germany hoped that by dinning this claim into the heads of the Munichmen in the West it would get the maximum out of the bargaining for a wide-ranging political

¹ Andrei Grechko, *The Armed Forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp. 19-20; S. G. Gorshkov, *The Nation's Naval Power*, Moscow, 1979, p. 198 (in Russian).

compromise with the Anglo-French coalition that had been activated through the channel of "secret diplomacy". However, outside of bilateral relations an intensifying foreign policy struggle was going on between the USSR and Germany. Practically all the countries bordering on the Soviet Union were becoming the theatre of this struggle. Here the strategic aims of the sides were incompatible.

The first war-time September did not pass before one of the contradictions between the Soviet Union and Germany had come to a head. The new data brought into scientific research by Soviet experts on the history of the Baltic region show how purposefully German diplomacy built up its political influence in the Baltic states in order to turn these states into Germany's satellites. For example, Germany demanded that Lithuania enter the war on Germany's side against Poland and thereby make it possible for the Wehrmacht to be brought into Lithuania. German-Lithuanian secret negotiations, held from the end of August to September 20, 1939, produced the draft of a document headed "Provisions of an Agreement on the Defence of Germany and Lithuania" envisaging the conclusion of a military treaty. The substance of this document was determined by the provision that "Lithuania will come under the wardship of the German Reich".¹ Under this treaty the Lithuanian army was in fact to be placed under Wehrmacht control. On September 25, 1939, Hitler signed the secret directive No. 4 prescribing the stationing of troops in East Prussia sufficient for a swift occupation of Lithuania even if it should resist.² In the case of Latvia Germany deliberately evaded to reaffirm a readiness to respect the neutrality proclaimed by that nation despite the requests from the Latvian government. Expansionism determined Berlin's calculations relative to Estonia, as well. Himmler lamented: "It was our misfortune that we failed to conquer Estonia as early as 1939."³

In this situation, at the close of September and in early October 1939 the Soviet Union launched a series of foreign policy

¹ *Socialist Revolutions of 1940 in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Restoration of the Soviet Power*, Moscow, 1978, p. 217 (in Russian).

² Ibid.

³ *A History of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (From Ancient Times to Our Day)*, Tallinn, 1958, p. 584 (in Russian).

actions to reinforce its security in the Baltic region. These included mutual assistance treaties with Estonia (September 28), Latvia (October 5), and Lithuania (October 10). Germany was concentrating on its preparations for an offensive in the West and refrained from open actions against the USSR in connection with these developments. But Berlin was obviously against the signing of the mutual assistance treaties between the USSR and the Baltic states, and German diplomacy sought to obstruct or, if possible, wreck the negotiations on these treaties.

The leaders of the Anglo-French coalition at once saw the anti-German thrust of these steps by the USSR. In a talk with the Soviet ambassador on October 6, 1939, Winston Churchill declared that Britain had no reason to object to the Soviet actions in the Baltic region. The ambassador reported to Moscow: "Churchill is well aware that the mutual assistance treaties between the USSR and the Baltic states diminish the possible Lebensraum for Hitler."¹ Speaking to I. M. Maisky on October 16, 1939, Lord Halifax acknowledged that the Soviet Union's treaties with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had stabilised relations and were a contribution to peace in Eastern Europe.²

Throughout the first half of 1940, counting on using the Baltic region as a springboard for invading the USSR, Germany actively reinforced its position in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In May 1940, in the presence of Göring, Keitel, Rosenberg, and Bormann, Hitler put forward the strategic line, saying: "All the Baltic states must be incorporated in the Reich."³ Instead of creating a springboard for aggression against the USSR, the developments in the Baltic in the summer of 1940 led to something quite different—the victory of socialist revolutions in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

In the northwest, where the Soviet-Finnish conflict, orchestrated from without, had broken out, Nazi diplomacy believed that a protracted war would best serve Germany's interests for it would hold most of the Soviet Union's attention to the detriment

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Second World War. Papers of Scientific Conference Dedicated to the 20th Anniversary of the Victory Over Nazi Germany*, Book 1, Moscow, 1966, p. 302 (in Russian).

of its efforts to strengthen its security. In Berlin they were pleased that Britain and France had undertaken the main role in bringing about a worsening of external conditions for the USSR in the northwest, thereby freeing Germany from any special need to exert an extraordinary effort in that direction. To a large extent the Nazi calculations were based on the hope that by their anti-Soviet policy Britain and France would ultimately provoke a sharp reaction from the USSR, up to a military opposition to this policy, and thereby fuel tension to a breaking point in the Soviet Union's relations with Germany's imperialist adversaries. "Nothing could be more desirable for Germany," wrote Juho Niukkanen, a Finnish political leader of those days, "as a British action against the Soviet Union."¹ In Berlin it was noted joyfully that the British and the French were getting more and more deeply involved in anti-Soviet activities and increasingly becoming diverted from the war against Germany. This was why in early January 1940 Berlin ignored a Finnish request for mediation between the USSR and Finland. Meanwhile, on January 11, when the conflict was at its height, the German envoy in Helsinki Wipert von Blücher strongly advised a tougher stand towards the USSR.²

Soviet diplomacy saw what Germany was up to. On January 17, 1940, the Soviet ambassador in London wrote to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs: "The German Foreign Ministry is now pursuing the line of playing off the USSR against Britain and France—using the Finnish events to this end in the hope of causing a final rupture between Moscow and the 'Western powers'—and of prolonging the Finnish war, allowing for support to Mannerheim from neutral states (Sweden, Norway, Italy.—P.S.) in the shape of Scandinavian volunteers or troops from Britain and France."³

In early December 1939 the Soviet government learned that Germany and Italy were getting together to extend military assistance to the Finnish militarists and that Berlin was encouraging Italy's military supplies to Finland. The Soviet government was quick to act. On December 9 von Schulenburg reported to

¹ Juho Niukkanen, *Tavlisodan puolustusministeri kertoo*, Werner Söderström, Porvoo, 1951, p. 248.

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. VIII, 1951, p. 650.

³ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Berlin: "Molotov asked me to call on him this afternoon and told me with visible agitation that during the last few days Italy had delivered about 50 pursuit planes to Finland, and that Germany had permitted the transit of these planes. Molotov declared that Italy's conduct was 'provocative' and 'outrageous' and that the Soviet Government would demand an explanation by Italy on this account. Germany's complicity, however, was completely incomprehensible to the Soviet Government."¹

Signed on March 12, 1940, the peace treaty between the USSR and Finland upset the calculations of the nazis. The German envoy in Finland von Blücher reported to Berlin that Germany's influence in Finland had been seriously eroded and that the USSR had greatly strengthened its position in the Baltic region.² The settlement of the conflict was a bitter disappointment to Berlin.

Germany subsequently endeavoured to aggravate Soviet-Finnish relations. For example, in the spring and summer of 1940 German diplomacy sought to disrupt the talks that were being held between the USSR and Finland on setting up mixed firms to develop the nickel mines in the Petsamo district. The Soviet Union officially protested to Germany. Nevertheless, at the close of July 1940 Germany and Finland reached an agreement whereby Germany would get 60 per cent of the Petsamo nickel ore. This was in flagrant violation of Finland's commitments to the USSR under the treaty of March 12, 1940. But Finland was already moving towards participation in aggression against the USSR.

As part of its efforts to counter the nazi designs the USSR sought to help the small North European nations. On April 13, 1940, after the nazis had overrun Denmark and Norway and were threatening Sweden, ambassador von Schulenburg was told in no uncertain terms that the Soviet government "was definitely interested in preserving the neutrality of Sweden" and "expresses the wish that Swedish neutrality should not be violated".³

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 506.

² *Ibid.*, p. 914.

³ M. Andreyeva and K. Dmitrieva, "The Soviet Union and Swedish Neutrality in the Second World War", *International Affairs*, No. 9, 1959, p. 67.

In Southwest Europe nazi Germany continued its anti-Soviet activities in Romania. In a conversation with the US envoy in Bucharest F. Günther in June 1940, the Romanian Foreign Minister Ion Gigurtu said that Romania was hoping shortly to receive a large quantity of German armaments and that with these supplies Romania would be in a position to fight the USSR for at least four months. He added that Romania was also counting on getting aviation assistance from Italy.¹

However, an aggravation of Soviet-Romanian relations to the point of an armed conflict was undesirable for Germany. In Berlin it was felt that this would imperil the oil supplies from Romania, which was Germany's main foreign purveyor of oil. Because of this circumstance the Soviet Union was able not only to avoid a clash with Germany in the southwest and neutralise possible German counter-measures when the "Bessarabian question" was being settled, but also compel Berlin to take into account the Soviet proposals to Romania on the terms for a settlement of that question. On June 25, 1940, the German Foreign Ministry informed von Schulenburg that "the Reich government would be prepared . . . to advise Rumania, if necessary, to reach a peaceful settlement of the Bessarabian question".² At the same time German diplomacy redoubled its efforts to fan, in the ruling quarters in Romania, nationalism and revanchist feeling, which it saw as effective means of keeping Romania on an anti-Soviet course.

German diplomacy was also very active at the southern approaches of the USSR. In particular, it tried to lure Turkey with the bait of territorial acquisitions, promising to restore some Arab states which Turkey had lost as a result of the First World War, and also to transfer to Turkey certain Greek islands at the Aegean entrance to the Dardanelles.³ In Berlin they realised that the principal obstacle to German diplomacy's plans relative to Turkey could be the latter's alliance with the USSR. Ernst Weizsäcker, State Secretary of German Foreign Ministry, instructed the German embassy in Ankara to prevent any rapproche-

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. I, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1959, pp. 478-79.

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. X, 1957, p. 13.

³ Eleanor Bisbee, *The New Turks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1951, p. 187.

ment with the USSR. Turkey, he wrote, had to remain "in fear of the Soviet Union".¹

The same line was pursued by Germany relative to Iran and Afghanistan. In his political report for 1940 the Soviet embassy in Tehran wrote: "German influence has grown perceptibly in Iran. The fact that Germany is Iran's biggest trading partner indicates that Germany has begun to play an important role in Iran's economy. The promotion of Germany's trade with Iran has been accompanied by a considerable enlargement of the German trade apparatus. Hundreds of experts, businessmen, tourists, and other persons of the most diverse professions have come to Iran."²

A major factor enabling the USSR to counter Germany's anti-Soviet activities in the south was its principled course towards developing equitable and mutually beneficial relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan in combination with a strong stand against manifestations of anti-Sovietism in the policy of the ruling quarters. This course gave the USSR's southern neighbours an alternative, actually the only alternative, to being drawn into the political and economic orbits of the imperialist powers of the two warring groups.

By the middle of the summer of 1940 the USSR had completed important measures to reinforce security at its European frontiers. All of these measures were aimed, one way or another, at reinforcing the positions of the USSR in the face of the inevitable collision with German fascism. A noteworthy assessment of the military-strategic aspect of these measures by the USSR was given by J. V. Stalin soon after Nazi Germany had begun its perfidious invasion of the Soviet Union. In a personal message to Winston Churchill of July 18, 1941, Stalin wrote: "The results of Hitler's unexpected denunciation of the non-aggression pact and the sudden attack on the Soviet Union, which placed German troops at an advantage, are still telling on the condition of the Soviet forces. One can see that the advantage of the German troops would have been far greater had the Soviet troops had to meet the German thrust not in the vicinity of Kishinev, Lvov, Brest, Belostok, Kaunas, and Vyborg, but

in the vicinity of Odessa, Kamenets-Podolsk, Minsk, and the environs of Leningrad."¹

2. BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH GERMANY: TRADE AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

The trade and economic aspects of the relations between the USSR and Germany were unique in some respect. In a talk with the British ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps on August 7, 1940, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR compared Soviet-German and Soviet-British trade relations. Noting that Germany was continuing to sell industrial plant to the Soviet Union, the People's Commissar stressed that "with Britain we are not managing this; on the contrary, the British have not even fulfilled our former contracts".² Within a relatively short period of time the USSR received important equipment from Germany. Quite a large number of Soviet specialists studied German industry, including the war industry. There was nothing of the kind in the relations with any other capitalist country. The Soviet attitude to trade with Germany was determined by a desire to make the utmost use of the economic, scientific, and technological resources of the future adversary—a highly developed industrial power—in order to develop Soviet industry and strengthen the country's defence potential.

In a collection of articles published in the FRG in 1977 it is noted: "In its trade relations with Germany the Soviet Union showed that it was a hard-bargaining, intractable partner who consistently pursued his own economic and defence interests. The opinion, frequently voiced by researchers that Soviet supplies of raw materials were 'a substantial support' for the German wartime economy fails to take into consideration the volume and range of the supplies that the USSR demanded and got from Germany. For example, at the close of 1940 the USSR agreed to increase

¹ *Correspondence of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 19 (in Russian).

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. IX, 1956, pp. 27-28.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

its sales of grain to Germany by 10 per cent, for which Germany had to increase its sales to the USSR of aluminium and cobalt, of which it was in short supply itself. In response to Germany's requests for additional supplies of raw materials the USSR made new demands for deliveries of machine-tools, trucks, and also armaments."¹

The fabrications about "Soviet economic assistance" to Germany were completely demolished by the USSR. One of the rebuttals came from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. In a speech in the spring of 1940 he said that Britain and France were continuing their attempts to justify their hostile acts relative to Soviet foreign trade with the allegation that "by our trade with Germany we are helping the latter in the war against Britain and France. It is not hard to see that this allegation is not worth a brass farthing. All one has to do is to compare the USSR with, say, Romania. Everybody knows that half of Romania's foreign trade is with Germany, while the proportion of Romania's national product in the exports to Germany of, for instance, basic items such as oil-products and grain is much larger than the proportion of the USSR's national product in our exports to Germany. Nevertheless, relative to Romania the governments of Britain and France do not resort to hostile acts and do not consider they can demand that Romania stop trading with Germany. The attitude to the Soviet Union is entirely different".²

In mid-1941 Germany's oil resources totalled 10 million tons: of these 500,000 tons were produced by Germany itself, 800,000 tons by the countries occupied by the nazis, and 8,700,000 tons by Germany's European allies, with bourgeois-landowner Romania accounting for the bulk of this amount. Altogether, in the period between 1939 and 1941 Germany's oil resources, augmented by its allied and the occupied countries, increased 20-fold.³ This clearly reveals the tendentiousness of the charge that the Soviet Union helped "Germany to overcome

¹ Friedrich Forstmeier, Hans-Erich Volksmann, *Kriegswirtschaft und Rüstung, 1939-1945*, Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1977, p. 382.

² *Sixth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. March 29-April 4, 1940. Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1940, p. 28 (in Russian).

³ Dietrich Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft, 1939-1945*, Vol. 1, 1939-1941, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1971, p. 223.

its dependence upon external sources of raw materials and food".

The Soviet diplomatic service and foreign trade organisations saw the political overtones of trade with Germany. A report on the fulfilment of the Soviet-German credit agreement signed on August 19, 1939, stated: "One is struck by the coordinated actions of the German firms in submitting proposals to our requests both in terms of prices and delivery schedules. The German firms take an unwarrantedly long time to process our requests. *Conclusion:* the behaviour of the German firms in fulfilling our requests and all commitments calls for maximum alertness and caution on our part in fulfilling our commitments to the Germans. This is all the more important since the behaviour of the German firms at present reflects the policy of the German government."¹

Two agreements, chiefly the credit agreement of August 19, 1939, which provided for placing Soviet contracts in Germany in the course of two years to be covered by a credit of 200 million marks and the sale of 180 million marks' worth of Soviet goods, underlay the trade and economic relations between the USSR and Germany. The credit was extended at an interest rate of 5 per cent. Talks started in October 1939 between the USSR and Germany ended on February 11, 1940, with the signing of an economic agreement under which the Soviet Union was to supply Germany with raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods, including armaments.

An indication of how the USSR used the opportunities opened up in its trade and economic relations with Germany is the experience of a group of representatives of the Soviet aircraft industry who went to Germany as members of a trade delegation. One of the group's task was to study German aircraft technology up to the selection of items to be purchased. A member of this group, the noted aircraft designer A. S. Yakovlev, wrote in his memoirs: "A few days after our arrival in Berlin we were received by Colonel-General Ernst Udet, deputy to Hermann Göring, who was Air Minister at the time. General Udet was in charge of the technological division of the Air Ministry and

¹ P. Sevostyanov, "On the Eve of the Great Battle, September 1939-June 1941", *International Affairs*, No. 4, 1978, p. 115.

had close links to Messerschmitt, Dornier, Heinkel, and other aircraft manufacturers. . . He told us at once that he had been instructed by Göring to show us all the aircraft, engines, and equipment used by the German air force.

"After we had acquainted ourselves with the air equipment, we began to doubt whether what the Germans had been showing were the latest models. But a tour of the factories allayed most of our doubts. The serial production of aircraft and engines and the equipment used by the factories quite convincingly indicated that what we were shown in Johannisthal comprised the basis of the Luftwaffe's equipment."¹

In contacts with German representatives on economic matters the Soviet side was active in upholding the interests of the Soviet Union. This was seen clearly by the Germans. In a telegram of December 19, 1939, from Moscow on the drawing up of a Soviet-German economic agreement the leaders of the German delegation noted: "As we expected, our first talk, which we had today with Mikoyan, led to complications: Mikoyan insisted on the German compensation deliveries being made up of military supplies as far as possible. The Soviet government insisted on an affirmative reply to the summary list, sent to Berlin of military contracts, including individual items that have been conclusively declined in Berlin. We have declined the possibility of delivering the following items: two cruisers—the *Seydlitz* and the *Prinz Eugen*—the blueprints of the *Bismarck*, heavy naval guns, 240 mm cannon, mines, and torpedoes of the latest designs, and plant for the production of artillery shells. The Soviet government considers, however, that nothing less than the delivery of all the listed items will be an adequate equivalent to supplies of raw materials."²

On December 22, 1939, the German ambassador von Schulenburg complained to V. M. Molotov: "There is considerable

disagreement in the economic talks between representatives of the USSR and Germany; in particular, no common language has been found on the Soviet Union's wishes in the military field. . . The Soviet programme is exorbitant, and the German government, which is in a state of war, cannot grant these wishes."¹

There was a resolute Soviet reaction whenever the Germans did not comply fully with the terms of the trade and economic agreements with the USSR. For instance, on April 6, 1940, von Schulenburg reported to Berlin that Mikoyan had pointed to the delay of coal deliveries from Germany. "As long as no drastic change for the better takes place in this matter," he said, "and as long as no effective supplies come from Germany there can be no question of the Soviet Union resuming deliveries of grain and oil."²

There was a constant strain in Soviet-German contacts on trade and economic matters.

After they had decided to attack the Soviet Union the nazis sought time and again to use trade with the USSR to divert its attention. In a book entitled *Basic Facts for a History of the German War and Armament Economy*, General Georg Thomas, chief of the OKW's economic and armaments department, wrote: "On August 14, the Chief of the Wirtschaftsrüstungsamt, during a conference with Reich Marshal Göring, was informed that the Führer desired punctual delivery to the Russians only until the spring of 1941. Later on we were to have no further interest in completely satisfying the Russian demands."³ However, the German Foreign Ministry recommended that German firms should accept Soviet contracts even if they could not be fulfilled within the schedules stipulated in the contracts. While pretending that it was meeting its commitments, Germany used every opportunity to back down on supplies of equipment to the USSR.

Under these conditions Soviet diplomacy and foreign trade organisations redoubled their efforts to obtain political benefits from trade and economic relations with Germany. Trade talks

¹ A. Yakovlev, *Purpose of My Life. Notes of an Aircraft Designer*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 168-72; P.A. Zhilin, *How Nazi Germany Planned the Invasion of the Soviet Union (Calculations and Miscalculations)*, 2nd enlarged edition, Moscow, 1966, pp. 216-17 (both in Russian).

² *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945. Aus dem Archiv des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes*, P. Keppler Verlag KG, Baden-Baden, Frankfurt on Main, 1961, p. 438.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² J. W. Brügel, *Stalin und Hitler. Pakt gegen Europa*, Europaverlag, Vienna, 1973, p. 200.

³ *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. 111, Nuremberg, 1947, p. 331.

took place in Moscow in November 1940. The Soviet side insisted on an increase of German exports to the USSR exclusively of scarce machine-tools and industrial plant. In this connection the German representative Karl Schnurre reported to Berlin: "The Soviet Union only desired to buy from us the things which it urgently needed."¹

After the Soviet delegation led by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs returned to Moscow from Berlin in November, A. S. Yakovlev, who was a member of an economic delegation, remained behind on a government assignment to continue studying the German aircraft industry. "Upon my return to Moscow," he writes, "I was summoned to the Kremlin virtually from the railway station. . . Stalin, as before, was very keen to know whether the Germans were not deceiving us in their sales of air equipment. I reported that now, as a result of this third trip, I could say quite definitely that the Germans had shown us the real level of their aviation technology. And that the models of this technology purchased by us—Messerschmitt-109s, Heinkel-100s, Junkers-88s, Dornier-215s, and others—are representative of the present state of Germany's aircraft industry. . . I said that it was my firm belief that rendered myopic by their successes in subjugating Europe, the Germans never let the thought enter their heads that the Russians could give as good as they received. . . Late that night, before letting me go home, Stalin, said: 'Organise the study of the German aircraft by our people. Compare them with our latest. Learn to overcome them'.²

"Each day of the peaceful respite," Yakovlev noted, "was working in our favour.

"The gain in time was precious especially for our aircraft industry: in 1939-1940 it allowed developing new, modern combat aircraft and launching their serial production by 1941."³

The results of the implementation of the economic agreement between the USSR and Germany from February 11, 1940, to June 22, 1941, showed that the Soviet Union had done all in

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, 1960, p. 721.

² A. S. Yakovlev, op. cit., p. 220.

³ Ibid., p. 221.

its power to use the German economy for reinforcing its own defence capacity. Altogether, on the basis of this agreement, Germany supplied the USSR with goods worth a total of 287,700,000 marks.¹

3. THE NAZI THREAT GROWS

After defeating France and occupying some other European countries Nazi Germany approached the main assault position of its drive for world hegemony. In the geopolitical calculations of the Nazi leaders everything was dovetailed to the tenet that in the Eastern Hemisphere there was now only one force capable of upsetting their plans. War with the Soviet Union—the underlying objective of fascism's entire international programme—had now become the immediate task.

Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, the English historian, notes that had Germany defeated the Soviet Union it would have become the dominant force in Eurasia. He writes that Hitler made no secret of his intentions when he planned genocide in the East: "The goal of the *Ostpolitik* is to open up an area of settlement for a hundred million Germans."² Barry A. Leach, also an English historian, quotes Hitler explaining his "Eastern policy" in 1932 to a narrow circle: "I do not follow General Ludendorff nor anyone else. . . I am not thinking in the first instance of economical matters. Certainly we need the wheat, oil and the ores. . . But our true object is to step up our rule for all time, and to anchor it so firmly that it will stand for a thousand years."³ "A war of conquest against Russia," Leach writes, "was for Hitler the main means of fulfilling his desire for 'Lebensraum'. Not only was the USSR the possessor of vast territories rich in resources but it "was also the centre of Bolshevism".⁴

¹ P. Sevostyanov, op. cit., p. 117.

² *The Origins of the Second World War*. A. J. P. Taylor and His Critics, edited by W. R. Louis, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1972, p. 52.

³ Barry A. Leach, *German Strategy Against Russia, 1939-1941*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

Eberhard Jäckel, a West German scholar, writes: "The succession of the individual elements of Hitler's programme ... fell into three major phases. The first phase was to restore Germany's military power and conclude an alliance with Britain and Italy. The purpose of this alliance was to enable Germany to complete unhindered all the preparations for settling accounts with France. In the second phase there would, definitely, be war with France that would permit not only putting an end to France's striving for hegemony in Europe but would, at the same time, eliminate the threat to Germany from the rear during its expansion eastward. And only then, after France's destruction, in the third and last phase there could be a great war of conquest against Russia—which would be very simple militarily for there would no longer be any obstacle."¹

On July 22, 1940, Hitler ordered to begin the operational planning of an invasion of the USSR. The strategic aims, the overall conception of the war, and preliminary timetables were specified on July 31, 1940, at an enlarged conference of the top echelon of the German armed forces. Hitler declared at this conference: "*Russia must be demolished. The time—spring of 1941*".² The war was to last five months; it was to end by the autumn of 1941.

By mid-November 1940 the German command had drawn up a more detailed plan of war against the Soviet Union. It was at first code-named Otto. The elaboration and specification of the strategic guidelines for this war continued until the latter half of December 1940. As the English historian Alan Bullock points out, "There was nothing improvised about Hitler's attack on Russia. Of all his decisions it was the one taken farthest in advance and most carefully planned for."³

In accordance with the task of preparing for war against the USSR in approximately August 1940 a shift of accents was begun

¹ Eberhard Jäckel, *Frankreich in Hitlers Europa. Die deutsche Frankreichspolitik im zweiten Weltkrieg*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1966, pp. 20-21.

² Generaloberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, Vol. II, *Von der geplanten Landung im England bis zum Beginn des Ostfeldzuges (1. 7. 1940-21. 6. 1941)*, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 49.

³ *The Origins of the Second World War*, edited by E. M. Robertson, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., New York, 1971, p. 218.

in German foreign policy. It concentrated on several objectives. First, to reinforce the coalition of aggressor powers and consolidate Germany's role as the leader. Second, to complete the preparation of geographical bridgeheads against the USSR, ensure total German hegemony in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and qualitatively reinforce Germany's positions in countries bordering on the USSR in the south. Third, to create a situation in which the Soviet Union would have no allies on the international scene either before or, let alone, after the German attack. Fourth, to do everything to divert the USSR from further strengthening its security and defence capability and create the illusion that there was no threat from Germany to the USSR.

As early as September 19, 1940, Hitler decided to send a German division to Romania, and on the next day, September 20, 1940, he ordered a military mission to be sent to that country.¹ In the directive of the German High Command to the German military mission in Romania of September 20, 1940, the mission was instructed to be in charge of German troops in Romania.² On September 22, 1940, Germany signed an agreement with Finland on the transit of war materiel convoyed by German troops to Norway across Finnish territory.³ German military units appeared in Finland, too.

On September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact. The aggressor states undertook to support one another with all the political, economic, and military means at their disposal if one of them was attacked by any power not involved in the European war or the Japanese-Chinese conflict. A secret protocol appended to this pact and a number of secret agreements provided for the creation of the mechanism for coordinating the policies of the three countries in military and naval matters, the economy, military technology, mutual supplies of military equipment, and also technical personnel, and manpower. The political essence of the pact boiled down to interaction and cooperation among the three aggressive imperialist powers with the aim of gaining world supremacy and dividing the world among themselves.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, p. 136.

² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

The pact was directed against Britain and the USA, and also against the USSR despite the camouflage given to its anti-Soviet tenor by the provision that the pact did not affect the political status between the signatories and the USSR. The ulterior aim of the pact, the German ambassador in Tokyo Eugen Ott pointed out in a telegramme to Berlin of October 4, 1940, was to bring about a new alignment of forces in Europe and in the Far East. The means for achieving this aim could be to repulse the USA and put the Soviet Union out of action.

4. SOVIET-GERMAN POLITICAL CONFRONTATION IN NOVEMBER 1940

TOP-LEVEL TALKS

Direct contacts between the leaders of the two countries in November were the central development in Soviet-German relations during the latter half of 1940. In Berlin these contacts were regarded as a foreign policy measure of special significance aimed at lulling the vigilance of the USSR, diverting it from strengthening its security in the west, and bringing it into collision with Britain.

On October 13, 1940, the Nazi leadership sent J.V. Stalin a letter in which it tried to justify its actions relative to Romania and Finland, the signing of the Tripartite Pact, and so on. In the same letter V. M. Molotov was invited to visit Berlin in his official capacity "for talks".¹ The purely divertive character of this German initiative was revealed in a directive on Germany's military plans for the future signed by Hitler a day before the talks began, on November 12, 1940. Point 5 of this directive read: "Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the coming period. Regardless of what results these discussions will have, all preparations for the East which already have been orally ordered are to be continued."²

Having announced their initiative the Nazis started another

¹ Ibid., pp. 292-97, 317.

² Ibid., p. 331.

propaganda campaign stressing "Soviet-German friendship". They conducted this campaign with unprecedented cynicism. "Through unofficial channels they produced the most incredible inventions in order to dupe world public opinion about the character of the forthcoming Soviet-German talks.

"The rumours spread in the German capital in this connection touched virtually upon all problems that could be conjured up by unrestrained fantasy and imagination. It was said, for example, that the Soviet Union would discuss with Germany the situation in the Balkans, that the USSR wanted a strong position in the Middle East—to open the road to India through Iran and Afghanistan. It was asserted that Russia wanted the Dardanelles as a free outlet to the Mediterranean. The more sceptical of the newsmen offered the opinion that this meeting would not go beyond the framework of a protocol visit, that it could only concern the signing of Soviet-German agreements allegedly because the trade commitments were being unsatisfactorily fulfilled. Others, on the contrary, declared that the USSR wished to join the Tripartite Pact. The United Press Bulletin, issued in Berlin, wrote that the forthcoming Berlin talks were the prelude of a conference of four powers—the USSR, Germany, Japan, and Italy."¹

Flatly rejecting Berlin's attempts to misrepresent the character of German-Soviet relations, the Soviet government decided to use the visit to Berlin to clarify Hitler's intentions, stave off German aggression for as long as possible, and protest strongly against the military and political activities that the Nazis had been engaged in along the European frontiers of the USSR since the summer of 1940.

By the time the Soviet delegation arrived German diplomacy had drawn up documents that underlay the proposals to the Soviet Union: the draft of an agreement between the signatories of the Tripartite Pact and the Soviet Union and also the drafts of two secret protocols appended to it. The German draft agreement envisaged the Soviet Union's "political cooperation" with Germany, Japan, and Italy and a four-power commitment "to respect each other's natural spheres of influence" and to expand economic relations. It was proposed that the USSR should sub-

¹ I. F. Filippov, *Notes on the Third Reich*, Moscow, 1970, pp. 124-25 (in Russian).

scribe to a declaration stating: "The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations centre south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean."¹

The talks took place on November 13 and 14. The head of the Soviet delegation had two meetings with Hitler. Both were unproductive. At the first talk Hitler mainly held forth on the overall military-political situation in the world, hammering the argument that Britain's defeat by the Axis powers was inevitable. He maintained that Germany was in firm control of the whole of continental Western Europe, and that the German and Italian forces in Africa would very soon throw the British out of that continent. Therefore, he declared, the main thing was to divide the "British colonial heritage", and he would like to hear the Soviet "considerations" on this score.

The head of the Soviet delegation refused to be drawn into a discussion of imperialist geopolitics. He put to Hitler concrete and incisive questions related to ensuring the security of the USSR and other East European nations, including the questions of what the purpose was of the presence of German troops in Finland and of the German military mission in Romania. Hitler's purely formal explanations were found to be unsatisfactory and were rejected. It was pointed out to him that in the case of Finland it was obvious that Germany was massing troops there. In Romania there were much too many military men for a single mission and that, besides, the transfer of troops was continuing. Evading an answer Hitler said he lacked information.

"Then Hitler started off again about his fantastic plan for the division of the world," writes V. M. Berezhevskiy, who together with V. N. Pavlov (First Secretary of the Soviet embassy in Berlin) as the interpreter took the minutes of the talk for the Soviet side. Britain, Hitler declared, would be defeated and occupied by German forces within the next few months, while the USA would for many years be unable to pose a threat to the "new Europe". It was therefore time to consider creating a "new order" throughout the world. As for the German and the Italian governments, he said, they had already outlined their spheres of

interests, which included Europe and Africa. Japan was interested in East Asia. On this basis, Hitler explained, the Soviet Union might show interest in the territory south of its frontier in the direction of the Indian Ocean, which would give it access to warm water ports.

"Here Molotov interrupted Hitler to say that he could see no point in discussing schemes of this kind. The Soviet government was only interested in preserving the peace and security of the countries bordering on the Soviet Union.

"Hitler paid no attention to this interruption and proceeded to expound his plan for the division of the British Empire now that it was about to become leaderless. The conversation began to assume a strange character with the Germans seeming not to hear what was said to them."¹ And this went on for two and a half hours.

From Moscow, where the delegation's report on its first meeting with Hitler was immediately examined, came categorical instructions: the German proposal was to be rejected and the Soviet delegation was to continue demanding an explanation of the issues directly affecting the security of the USSR. The next meeting with Hitler, held on November 14, was even more tense than the first. The Soviet side re-emphasised that Finland was being virtually occupied by the Wehrmacht. It pointed out that according to information available to the USSR, the German troops were reinforcing their positions along the Soviet frontier. The Soviet government demanded the immediate withdrawal of German troops from Finland. Instead of replying, Hitler spoke of "far-reaching repercussions" of a conflict in the Baltic region, in other words, resorted to the language of threats.

Then, returning to a conciliatory tone, Hitler said it was not worth wrangling over "minor, inconsequential matters". But he was returned to precisely these matters. Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania—what was Germany's policy in these countries? Hitler was told that the Soviet government regarded the German and Italian guarantees given to Romania shortly before the talks in Berlin as directed against the interests of the USSR. The Soviet

¹Valentin Berezhevskiy, *History in the Making (Memoirs of World War II Diplomacy)*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, pp. 26, 27.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, pp. 508-09.

side demanded the annulment of these guarantees, to which Hitler at once replied that this could not be done.

"Molotov then asked:

"Then what would Germany say if in view of Moscow's interest in the security of the area adjacent to its south-western borders the Soviet Union gave Bulgaria guarantees similar to those which Germany and Italy had given to Romania?"

"This statement annoyed Hitler visibly. 'What,' he almost screamed in reply, 'has King Boris asked Moscow for guarantees? I know nothing of this. In any case I shall have to consult with Mussolini. Italy is also interested in this part of Europe.' And then he added threateningly: 'If Germany were by chance looking for sources of friction with Russia it would find them in any region.'"¹

After the talk with Hitler, Ribbentrop invited Molotov to his residence in the Wilhelmstrasse in the evening. There Ribbentrop said that it would be expedient to agree in principle on the matters touched on by Hitler. Molotov stood his ground, asking, "if they would have long to wait for an explanation as to why German troops were in Romania and Finland".² Ribbentrop replied without trying to hide annoyance that "if the Soviet government continued to concern itself with what he called 'inessential questions', they could be discussed through the usual diplomatic channels."³ For all practical intents and purposes (the talk ended on this note. The Soviet delegation left Berlin.

The protocol aspect of the Soviet delegation's departure was significant. Not a trace remained of the pomp and courtesy: a cold send-off and a dry exchange of official words. After the meetings the nazis continued their ballyhoo—German newspapers kept trumpeting that the Berlin negotiations were of "historic significance". On November 17, 1940, the newspaper *Das Reich*

¹ Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

² Ibid., p. 38.

³ Ibid.; The German ambassador in Moscow von Schulenburg was informed on November 26, 1940, that in order to continue the talks begun in Berlin Germany would have to meet a number of conditions, namely: German troops had to be withdrawn from Finland immediately; within the next few months Soviet security had to be ensured by the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. The ambassador at once conveyed these terms to Berlin, but there was no reply.

wrote: "The talks in Berlin showed the world that Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union have come to an agreement on the spheres of interest."¹ The propaganda about a "Soviet-German compact" continued.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS IN MOSCOW AND IN BERLIN

What were the assessments and practical conclusions in Moscow about the results of the Soviet-German talks? The brief on these talks sent to the Soviet ambassador in London on November 17, 1940, by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs stated: "As the talks showed, the Germans want to lay their hands on Turkey under the pretext of guaranteeing its security on the pattern of Romania, and the carrot held out to us is the promise of reconsidering the Montreux Convention in our favour, and it is suggested that we should help them in this matter. We did not give our consent for we consider that, first, Turkey must remain independent and, second, that the Straits regime can be improved as a result of our talks with Turkey and not behind its back. It is quite obvious that the Germans and the Japanese would very much like to push us in the direction of the Persian Gulf and India. We declined to discuss this question for we consider such advice from Germany inappropriate."²

On a wider plane the Molotov visit to Berlin enabled the Soviet leaders to give German intrigues yet another firm rebuff on a high state level and clarify some of Nazi Germany's intentions. In the Soviet Union important conclusions were drawn about the international situation and about how it affected the USSR. In the first place, it was noted that an Anglo-German imperialist compromise was now hardly probable. Naturally, this allowed counting on Britain in the long term as a potential ally. As regards the Balkan states, three of them—Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary—had been reduced to, in effect, Nazi satellites; Czechoslovakia was enslaved; Greece was about to be enslaved. As for Turkey, it was also bent on binding itself by close ties with

¹ Quoted from I. F. Filippov, op. cit., p. 134.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

Germany. Yugoslavia was the only Balkan nation that could be to some extent regarded as a potential member of the anti-Hitler camp. Having drawn these conclusions, the Soviet government did not return to talks on the questions raised by Germany any more, despite constant reminders from Ribbentrop. "As will be seen, this was a sounding out, a probing by the Soviet government of the position of the Hitler Government, which did not lead, and could not lead, to an agreement of any kind."¹

The Soviet Union's rejection of the Nazi programme for dividing up the world and of the offer to join the Tripartite Pact, and its demand for the withdrawal of German troops from Finland and an end to German expansion in regions directly affecting the security of the USSR, notably in Finland, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the southern approaches to the Soviet Union were assessed by the Nazi leaders as convincing evidence that the USSR would not fall for distracting manoeuvres and saw the growing threat to its security from Nazi Germany's actions in Eastern Europe. In Berlin they also realised conclusively that Germany would not succeed in bringing the USSR into conflict with Britain and that the Soviet Union would not even discuss any combinations that could aggravate Soviet-British relations. In generalising the reaction in Berlin to the results of the November contacts, the West German historian, Heinz Holldack notes: "Moscow had no intention of committing itself against the Western powers and to yield to Germany on controversial issues relating to Eastern Europe."²

The British ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps sent the British Foreign Office his evaluation of the Molotov visit to Berlin, writing that "the result of the meeting had been negative" and that "the Russians wanted to keep their freedom of action and had not responded to Hitler's efforts to get their support and cooperation in German moves in the Near and Middle East."³ As for the German leaders, their thinking was articulated by

¹ *Falsifiers of History. An Historical Document on the Origins of World War II*, Committee for Promotion of Peace, New York, 1948, p. 59.

² Heinz Holldack, *Was wirklich geschah. Die diplomatischen Hintergründe der deutschen Kriegspolitik. Darstellung und Dokumente*, Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, Munich, 1949, pp. 240-41.

³ Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1962, p. 146.

Hitler, who, referring to the November contacts with the USSR, told the Turkish ambassador in Germany Hüsrev Gerede on March 17, 1941: "Germany had exerted herself to draw Russia into the great combination against England."¹ Churchill summed up the talks in Berlin as follows: "As was expected, the Soviet Government did not accept the German project."²

The outcome of the Soviet-German top-level contacts in November gives the lie to the assertions of some bourgeois historians that the Molotov visit to Berlin was a "watershed" of sorts in Soviet-German relations in 1939-1941, that prior to November 1940 the USSR had been "giving in" to Germany and that "real" tension appeared in these relations after the Molotov visit. The talks in Berlin were in no way an "exceptional" event, let alone a "watershed" in Soviet-German relations during the early period of the Second World War. This outcome was natural from the angle of the general trends in the relations between the two countries and also from the angle of the approach of each of them to the specific problems that figured in the talks. It is another thing that the tension in Soviet-German relations, hitherto mostly latent, now surfaced unmistakably. The new factor was hence chiefly the form of this tension which developed into a sharp political confrontation. However, Berlin of course, had earlier been aware of the Soviet Union's negative attitude to its moves in Eastern Europe after the "phony war" had come to an end. The Soviet Union's insistence on the withdrawal of Nazi troops from Finland, its anxiety over the German military presence in Romania, and its demand that Germany abide by the terms of the non-aggression pact were all elements of the Soviet policy of countering the growth of German activity in areas adjacent to the USSR.

This policy was pursued without change prior to and after the November talks, and it covered not only those countries and regions that were mentioned in Berlin. For example, in early September 1940 the Soviet Union lodged an official protest to Germany against the so-called "Vienna arbitration verdict". Ambassador von Schulenburg wrote that Molotov "asked me to call the attention of the German Government to the fact that by its

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XII, 1962, p. 310.

² Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. II, *The Finest Hour*, p. 520.

action it had violated article III of the Non-Aggression Pact, which provided for consultation".¹

As Germany stepped up its activities in Northern Europe, the Soviet government instructed the Soviet ambassador in Sweden A. M. Kollontai to assure the Swedish government that "unconditional recognition and respect of the full independence of Sweden is the unalterable position of Government".² "Premier Hansson," Kollontai reported back to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, "received our assurances with obvious satisfaction. He asked me to convey his sincere gratitude to the Soviet Government for its statement which is so important for Sweden. It is moral support to the cabinet in its policy which is striving to keep Sweden out of the war and at the same time consolidate friendly relations with the USSR... The Premier several times stressed the value and importance of the assurances conveyed by me."³

On September 7, 1940, Sweden and the USSR concluded a trade treaty. Expressing the sentiments of Swedish businessmen Senator Hjalmar Branting told the Soviet ambassador that the "consolidation of good-neighbour relations between Sweden and the Soviet Union with a trade treaty is a real guarantee against the 'peaceful occupation' of Sweden by Germany".⁴

Despite the counter-action by the USSR, Germany pressed forward with its foreign policy preparations for aggression. In November 1940, for example, acting through the German military attaché in Budapest, the Chief of the Wehrmacht General Staff General Halder sent General Henrik Werth, Chief of the Hungarian General Staff, a message notifying the latter that operations would begin against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941. In the same message Halder made it clear that a decision had been taken in Germany to attack the USSR. "In this... war, possibly against Yugoslavia and definitely against Soviet Russia," Halder wrote, "Hungary would have to participate if only in her own interests."⁵

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, p. 1.

² N. Andreyeva and K. Dmitrieva, "The Soviet Union and Swedish Neutrality in the Second World War", *International Affairs*, No. 9, 1959, p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁵ *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, Vol. VII, 1947, p. 331.

Germany encouraged the anti-Soviet sentiments of Bulgaria's monarchist elite. In a talk with the Bulgarian envoy in Berlin N. Draganov on November 23, 1940, Hitler said Bulgaria had to harden its policy towards the USSR, assuring the envoy that it should not fear a deterioration of its relations with the Soviet Union.¹ Nazi diplomacy wanted Bulgaria to adhere to the Tripartite Pact as early as possible and thereby block Bulgaria's attempt to develop relations with the USSR in a positive direction. "One must confront Russia with accomplished facts," Hitler told Draganov at a second meeting on December 3, 1940 adding: "If Bulgaria adhered to the Tripartite Pact, Russia would automatically take her hands off Bulgaria."²

In the evening of December 18, 1940, Hitler signed a general directive on hostilities against the USSR for all arms under No. 21 and code-named Case Barbarossa.

THE NAZIS SPREAD THE "SOVIET-GERMAN CONCORD" LIE

The preparations that were now under way in Germany for war against the USSR were accompanied by a further activation of the line Berlin had been pursuing from the very outset of the Second World War: no effort was spared to spread the lie that there were "good", almost "friendly" and "cordial" relations with the Soviet Union. But now the motivations for this line were different. While before the defeat of France German diplomacy, the intelligence service, and the propaganda agencies fabricated the myth of "Soviet-German concord" mainly to persuade the British and French leaders that Germany's rear in the East was "reliable" and thereby compel them to accept the Nazi terms for a wide-ranging anti-Soviet compromise, it was now found necessary above all to camouflage the preparations for aggression against the USSR and weaken the Soviet Union's efforts to reinforce its security.

Also indicative is the fact that for a long time the Nazis had kept their own allies misinformed, even though this was often

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, p. 676.

² *Ibid.*, p. 770.

in conflict with the actual requirements of their preparations for aggression against the USSR. An example is Hitler's message to Mussolini of December 31, 1940, in which the situation was depicted in optimistic terms: "I would like to add... that the present relationship with the Soviet Union is very good, that we are on the point of concluding a trade agreement satisfactory to both parties, and that therefore the hope is justified that the difficult points still open can also be solved in a reasonable manner."¹ As a matter of fact, this was only the close of the second week following the endorsement of Case Barbarossa.

The nazis tried to use every development in the bilateral relations between the USSR and Germany to conceal the tensions and camouflage preparations for the aggression. In April 1941 the USSR was invited, with a show of pomp, to participate in the Leipzig Fair. That same month a bilateral protocol was signed on regulating the frontier along a sector of the Baltic Sea region. In this connection, too, rumours were spread that "something positive" was planned in Soviet-German relations, that there might be an exchange of visits by prominent statesmen, that even J. V. Stalin might visit Berlin.

The nazis' assurances of peaceableness, their false declarations and hypocritical smiles did not change the fact that a fierce struggle was going on between irreconcilable adversaries who did not undertake any major foreign policy action without taking the possible response of the other side into consideration.

The misinformation spread by the nazis by far not always deluded serious observers even in countries close to Germany. In a report of June 20, 1941, to the Chief of the Hungarian General Staff General Henrik Werth on the state of Soviet-German relations the Hungarian military attache in Germany Colonel Alexander Homlok wrote: "The political, military, and economic contradictions between Germany and Soviet Russia have run so deep and the German Reich... is so bent on destroying Soviet Russia as a great power that as far as is humanly possible to foresee I would say that a military conflict with it is inevitable."²

¹ Ibid., p. 993.

² *Hungary and the Second World War. Secret Diplomatic Documents of the Eve and the Period of the War*, Moscow, 1962, p. 257 (in Russian).

Much less, then, did nazi Germany's campaign of misinformation delude the Soviet government. In the USSR a great deal was being done to heighten the mobilisation readiness of the people. An indication of this is, for example, a speech delivered on November 5, 1940, by M. I. Kalinin, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, at an institution of higher learning in Moscow. "The international political situation," he said, "is now highly unstable. Increasingly enveloped in the flames of the second imperialist war, the capitalist world has entered a period of violent convulsions that are fraught with very serious consequences. And since we are encircled by capitalist countries, it goes without saying that to one extent or another we feel the tremors of this earthquake. . . This complex and highly explosive international situation obliges us to be in constant mobilisation readiness so that nothing fortuitous catches us by surprise."¹

From its political, military, and trade representatives abroad the Soviet government knew that following the end of the "phony war" in Europe nazi Germany had become increasingly active in forming around the Soviet Union a ring of allies and satellites who would serve as springboards for the impending aggression, or participate in it directly, or, in the last resort, become "festered sores" for the USSR. In the prevailing situation the Soviet government did all in its power to break this ring or, in any case erode the nazi attempts to undermine the country's security even before hostilities were started against the USSR.

"We had to make haste," recalls Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevsky. "Fascist Germany's new action in Western Europe, the take-over of France in addition to smaller states, augmented our premonitions. We had to reckon with the fact that Germany had subjugated almost the entire industrial complex of Europe, its military potential was substantially boosted and its mouth watered still more. The danger of a German attack on the Soviet Union grew larger."²

¹ M. I. Kalinin, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 303-04 (in Russian).

² A. M. Vasilevsky, *A Lifelong Cause*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 76.

5. THE USSR AND ITALY

For Italian fascism the Second World War broke out at rather inopportune time—military preparations for aggression were far from being complete. While the nation's manpower resources made it possible to form up to 150 divisions, the Italian army's strength did not exceed 75-80 divisions on account of a shortage of armaments.¹ In combination with the intention to wait and see how the strategic situation would develop, this circumstance explains the "non-belligerent" power stand maintained by Italy until June 10, 1940. Mussolini assured Hitler: "Fascist Italy intends at this moment to be your reserve."²

The central issue for Rome's imperialist policy was not so much expansion in Europe—Germany was asserting itself in the continent—as the acquisition of new colonial possessions. The Italian leaders claimed that Italy had no free outlet to the ocean. It was hemmed in by the Mediterranean. The more its population and strength grew the greater would be the damage from this confinement. The bars of its prison were Corsica, Tunisia, Malta, and Cyprus. Its warders were Gibraltar and Suez.

They saw the objective of Italian policy in, above all, breaking the bars of this "prison". After this there would be only one aim—the march to the ocean. But to what ocean? To the Indian Ocean across the Sudan that lies between Libya and Abyssinia? Or to the Atlantic across French North Africa? In both cases there would be resistance from both the British and the French.

Italy's colonial interests, the war with Greece, and the hostilities begun by Rome against the British in Northeast and North Africa reduced the opportunities of Italian diplomacy for an intensive fight against the Soviet Union. But this did not change

¹ S. Vishnev, *Fascist Italy's Military Economy*, Moscow, 1946, p. 34 (in Russian).

² *Les lettres secrètes échangées par Hitler et Mussolini (1940-1943)*, Editions du Pavois, Paris, 1946, p. 57.

the substance of Rome's hostile attitude to relations with the USSR.

Italian fascism, Nazi Germany's chief partner in Europe, was solidly linked with the Nazis by the imperialist plans for achieving world supremacy and establishing a fascist "new order" in Europe and Asia. In Rome, as in Berlin, it was held that these aims could not be attained without first destroying the Soviet Union. Germany and Italy intended, at the expense of the USSR, not only to settle their own differences, of which there were many, but also to "reward" other countries for cooperating with them—Finland, Romania, Japan, and others that were laying claim to Soviet territory.

Italian diplomacy invariably showed an interest in organising an anti-Soviet conspiracy of states of the two imperialist groups. As early as the third day after the world war broke out Mussolini urged calling an immediate conference of Germany, Italy, Britain, France, and Poland to draw up the terms for a German-Polish armistice and the subsequent settlement between them. This idea lost its meaning at once on account of the speed with which the war was going on and the virtual absence of a government in Poland. On September 23, 1939, the Italian ambassador in Berlin Bernardo Attolico put out feelers to find out if the German leadership was prepared to sign a peace with the Western powers. In a personal message to Hitler of January 3, 1940, Mussolini wrote that Italy's peace-making was motivated above all by the need to unite the whole of Europe against the Soviet Union. "Russia is alien to Europe,"¹ the Duce wrote in conclusion.

In practical terms, the international interests of the Soviet Union and Italy came face to face most closely in Southeast Europe, the Balkans, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Italian imperialism's attempts to reinforce its positions in the countries of these regions—chiefly at Britain's expense—had also an anti-Soviet thrust, for they came into conflict with the efforts of Soviet foreign policy to strengthen the security of the USSR. Covertly and overtly Italy countered the Soviet Union's endeavour to ensure a positive development of its relations with Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Afghanistan.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 608.

Rome's bid in the autumn of 1939 to form a Mediterranean (Balkan) bloc likewise pursued hegemonistic aims. The Italian envoy in Kabul Pietro Quaroni reported to Rome at the time: "Italy's policy, especially our actions to form a bloc of neutral states under our aegis in the Balkan peninsula, is closely followed here. Our policy is interpreted here as essentially anti-Russian: the Afghans assume that one of the mainsprings of the policy of Italy's present activity is a desire to retain freedom of manoeuvre in order to observe Russia's actions and counter any advance by it in the Balkans and the Mediterranean."¹

Anti-Bolshevism was not only an aim but also a major vehicle of Rome's foreign policy. The Italian fascists used every opportunity to speak of their anti-communist leanings and fan the myth that there was a "Soviet threat" to the countries of Southeast Europe and the Balkans. The purpose was to use the smokescreen of anti-Sovietism to portray Italy as the "champion" of these countries, thereby ousting Italy's imperialist rivals.

Anti-Soviet aims were at the root of Italian diplomacy's actions to hurt Soviet interests in regions far distant from Italy. When the possibility of some improvement appeared in Soviet-Japanese relations after the Japanese military were defeated at the Khal-khin-Gol, the Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano instructed the Italian ambassador in Tokyo Giacinto Auriti on October 12, 1939, to do everything in his power to prevent this improvement. Italian embassies in different countries were instructed to step up their anti-Soviet activities. For instance, on December 22, 1939, Ciano cabled Auriti: "You must take energetic steps to get Japan to adopt an anti-Bolshevik policy and promote the traditional anti-Russian trends among the ruling quarters in Japan. Stress the anti-Bolshevik orientation adopted and reaffirmed in Italy."²

While it clearly saw the anti-Soviet and anti-communist nature of the policy of the Italian leadership, the USSR tried to avoid aggravating relations with Italy. It did not rule out the possibil-

ity of developing normal diplomatic, trade and economic relations with that country. However, the government in Rome did all it could to prevent Italian firms from purchasing in the USSR goods that could be bought in other markets. As a result, the contacts between the Soviet trade mission in Rome and Italian foreign trade organisations were actually reduced to correspondence on speeding up the issue of licenses to firms that had already purchased goods in the USSR and on other minor matters.

Fascist Rome's hostility towards the USSR subverted the possibilities for any appreciable development of Soviet-Italian relations.

The anti-Soviet accent in Italy's policy became particularly sharply pronounced during the armed conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland. Rome took steps to extend political support and military assistance to the Finnish militarists. In early December 1939 the Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano wrote in his diary: "I receive the Minister of Finland, who thanks me for the moral assistance given to his country, and who asks for arms and possibly specialists. No objection on our part to the sending of arms; some planes have already been sent. This, however, is possible only so long as Germany will permit the traffic. But how much longer will Germany consent? The Minister replies that that side of the question is settled, and confides to me that Germany herself has supplied arms to Finland, turning over to her certain stocks especially from the Polish war booty."³

In November 1939 anti-Soviet propaganda reached hysteria proportions in Italy, although initially Ciano had declared that Italy had no interest in the development of Soviet-Finnish relations. The USSR protested strongly against the rampage of anti-Sovietism on the part of the Italian fascists. On December 2, 1939, for instance, a big crowd of fascist-minded youths demonstrated in front of the Soviet embassy in Rome. A Soviet note was handed to the Italian Foreign Ministry on December 4, 1939, stating among other things: "...the embassy declares a strong protest against this scandalous demonstration and hopes that mea-

¹ D. D. I., nona serie: 1939-1943, Vol. II, Libreria dello Stato, Rome, 1957, p. 17.

² Ibid., p. 532.

³ *The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943*, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1946, p. 177.

asures will be taken to duly punish those responsible for organising it and that such incidents will not be repeated."¹

The anti-Soviet campaign in Italy reached such proportions that the Soviet government was compelled to protest repeatedly to the fascist government. In reply the Chief of the Cabinet of the Foreign Minister Filippo Anfuso declared on December 18 that "Italy has always abided by anti-Bolshevik policy and theory".²

In countering Italy's anti-Soviet activities Soviet diplomacy lost no opportunity to use Germany and its influence in Rome in order at least partially to blunt the anti-Sovietism of the Mussolini government. To some extent the line of taking the contradictions between the imperialist allies into account was effective. Preoccupied as it was with preparations for the offensive against France, the Nazi leadership felt a confrontation between its Italian ally and the USSR was undesirable at this moment. Berlin held that the time for this had not yet come. On January 19, 1940, von Ribbentrop requested the Italian charge d'affaires in Germany Massimo Magistrati to convey to Rome not to aggravate relations with the Soviet Union unnecessarily. Ribbentrop repeated this to Mussolini at a meeting with the latter in Rome on March 11, 1940.³

Soviet diplomacy managed to inhibit a worsening of relations with Italy for some time. There was some progress in economic relations between the two countries, and the Italian government agreed to begin trade with the USSR. An understanding was reached in principle on a visit to Moscow by an Italian trade delegation. However, after the Soviet Union stated its willingness to receive this delegation Rome procrastinated.

This was due not only to the anti-Soviet feeling of the Italian leaders—there had always been a surfeit of this feeling. In the autumn of 1940 Nazi Germany, which had started its direct preparations for an invasion of the USSR, had begun to persistently slow down all the efforts to promote Soviet-Italian contacts. Berlin blocked the already timid claims of Italian diplomacy to "interdependence". In February 1941, for instance, Rome informed Ber-

lin of an exchange of views between the diplomatic representatives of the USSR and Italy on the international situation in the Balkans and the status of the Black Sea straits. There was a sharply negative reaction from the Nazis to this exchange of views. The German ambassador in Rome was instructed to cut short these contacts, which he did with little trouble.¹

From the latter half of 1940 onwards relations between the USSR and Italy were in effect paralysed on account of the Mussolini government's anti-Soviet policy.

In the period of preparations for war against the USSR the German leadership did not hasten to inform Mussolini of its timetable. In principle, Berlin did not insist on direct Italian military assistance so as to inhibit any hopes its avid European partner had for spoils. The Nazi leaders felt it would be best to use Italy as a "guardian" of Axis interests in the Mediterranean and thereby block any possible activity by Britain.

But the Italian fascists had an idea of what was brewing. On May 30, 1941, Mussolini told the Chief of the Italian General Staff Ugo Cavallera that he "foresaw the possibility of a conflict between Germany and Russia" and that "we could not stay out of this because it involved the struggle against communism".²

Hitler informed Mussolini of his decision to attack the USSR on the very eve of the invasion.³ In the night of June 22, 1941, after a telephone call from Berlin with the news that hostilities had commenced against the USSR Mussolini at once issued instructions that the German leadership should be told that Italy would declare a state of war with the USSR as from 03.00 hours of June 22, 1941.

Rabid anti-communism and anti-Sovietism, and aspiration to be actively involved in carving up the world in order to enable the

¹ V. L. Issraelyan, L. N. Kutakov, *Diplomacy of Aggressors. The German-Italian-Japanese Fascist Bloc. Its Rise and Fall*, Moscow, 1967, pp. 104-05 (in Russian).

² *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 929.

³ The Soviet historians V. L. Issraelyan and L. N. Kutakov hold that the Italians were probably informed for the first time about Germany's plan to attack the USSR on June 2, 1941, during a Hitler-Mussolini meeting in the Brenner Pass. Records of this part of the Hitler-Mussolini talks are missing from the German documents that have so far been published. V. L. Issraelyan, L. N. Kutakov, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-07.

¹ *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

² *D. D. I., nona serie*, Vol. II, p. 496.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 452-61.

imperialist coalition of aggressor powers to establish a "new order", and the political and military alliance with nazi Germany were the factors that made Italian fascism a participant in the nazi aggression against the USSR from its very first day. Italy had no territorial claims on the USSR, let alone any other causes for war.

6. LAST MONTHS WITHOUT WAR: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIPLOMACY NARROW DOWN

NEW CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE SOVIET-GERMAN CONFRONTATION

In order to appreciate the difficulties that the USSR had to face during the last months prior to the Great Patriotic War it is important to take into consideration the objective fact that the imperialist coalition of aggressor powers headed by Germany was now an entirely different military, economic, and political group than at the outbreak of the war. By force of arms it had played havoc with the former international pattern, substantially restructured international relations in its favour, and secured a dominant position for itself in the capitalist part of the world.

Indeed, was it possible at the very outbreak of the Second World War to foretell that by the summer of 1941 nazi Germany would have been in occupation of 11 countries? And yet it was so. It crushed bourgeois-landowner Poland in 32 days and overran Denmark in a matter of 24 hours. It took the nazis only two months to occupy Norway. Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg ceased to exist within 19 days, while France resisted for 44 days. The British expeditionary forces suffered defeat and, abandoning their arms, were evacuated to Britain. Nazi troops overran some Balkan countries. In mid-1941 the territory controlled by Germany was six times larger than at the start of the war.¹ Militarist Japan occupied huge territories in Central and South China and then in Southeast Asia.

The balance of strength between the USSR and the German fascist bloc in terms of economic potential and raw material resources was shaping out by no means in favour of the Soviet

¹ D. Eichholtz, op. cit., p. 223.

Union. With the aid of the Wehrmacht and the party-state machine German monopoly capital was seizing command positions in Europe's economy.

The first huge military-industrial complexes in the history of twentieth-century monopoly capitalism were emerging, notably in Germany, and also in Japan and Italy. "Within the next few years," it was said on October 3, 1940, at a sitting of the Greater Council of the Imperial Industry Group (the central headquarters of the German monopolies), "our aim must be to use capital to seize in all fields the strongest positions at European enterprises, especially industrial enterprises, so as to be able, on that basis, to control the course of events."² The European dimension was now seen as not enough by German imperialism. In May 1940 the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry drew up recommendations for setting up a "German Colonial Reich". On the basis of these recommendations the idea was put forward of "greater economic space" for Germany that would embrace Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Norway. Subsequently, this "space" was to be enlarged to include the whole of Scandinavia, the Danube states, and the Baltic region, and then to incorporate the former German colonies in Africa, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and British Nigeria.³

Let us briefly compare the economic indices of the USSR and Germany just before the nazi aggression. In mid-1941 Germany itself (in annual terms) was producing more than 36 million tons of pig iron and steel, but the German-controlled potential of its European allies and the occupied countries increased the Third Reich's aggregate resources to 81,500,000 tons.⁴ The USSR (in annual terms) produced half as much pig iron and steel.⁵ In the production of coal Germany—even without the occupied and dependent countries—was far ahead of the USSR, while the potential of these countries nearly doubled Germany's resources.⁶

¹ *Anatomie des Krieges. Neue Dokumente über die Rolle des deutschen Monopolkapitals bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des zweiten Weltkrieges*, VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1969, p. 293.

² *Anatomie der Aggression. Neue Dokumente zu den Kriegszielen des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus im zweiten Weltkrieg*, Berlin, 1972, pp. 42-54.

³ D. Eichholtz, op. cit., p. 223.

⁴ *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 377.

⁵ D. Eichholtz, op. cit., p. 223.

Of machine-tools Germany alone had three times as many as the USSR in 1941 and was the largest producer in the world.

In the summer of 1941 Germany was producing 75 per cent more armaments than on September 1, 1939.¹ In this period the output of tanks almost doubled.² From August 1, 1940, to June 22, 1941, the Luftwaffe received nearly 7,700 new or overhauled combat aircraft.³ The monthly output of firearms in 1941 was almost 80 per cent above the 1939 level.⁴ But these statistics are for Germany only; they do not take into account the economic potential of the occupied countries and territories or the resources of Germany's allies.

On the eve of the invasion of the USSR the enemy's armed forces were the most powerful ever to be mustered by the biggest countries of the world. Germany had under arms nearly 8,500,000 effectives, comprising 214 divisions and seven brigades. The strike force of the Wehrmacht consisted of 35 panzer and motorised divisions. The Luftwaffe had over 10,000 aircraft.⁵

The pillaging of occupied countries and the exploitation of their economic resources led to an unprecedented growth of Germany's military-economic potential. In the course of the first 17 months of the world war the nazis seized in the occupied countries of Europe materials and property worth double Germany's prewar national income.⁶ On April 1, 1941, the Wehrmacht was being armed and serviced by nearly 5,000 factories and other enterprises on occupied territories.⁷ Ninety-two German divisions were using French and other captured vehicles.⁸ In September 1940 Romania supplied 60 per cent of Germany's petroleum.

In the period between the outbreak of the Second World War

¹ *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. 5, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1966, p. 287.

² *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, p. 288.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁶ *German Industry in the War of 1939-1945*, Moscow, 1956, p. 11 (in Russian).

⁷ Gerhard Förster, Heinz Helmut Otto, Helmut Schnitter, *Der preussisch-deutsche Generalstab 1640-1965*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1966.

⁸ Burkhar Mueller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer 1933-1945*, Vol. II, *Die Blitzfeldzüge 1939-1941*. Verlag von E. S. Mittler & Sohn, Frankfurt on Main, 1956, p. 105.

and mid-1941 the resources that Germany could count on (including those of its allies and the occupied countries) grew as follows: iron ore-7.7-fold; copper ore-3.2-fold; bauxites-22.8-fold; petroleum-20-fold; grain crops-4-fold; and cattle-3.7-fold.¹ In military terms nazi Germany's allies provided 29 infantry divisions, 16 brigades, nearly 1,000 aircraft, and over 5,000 pieces of ordnance and mortars for the war with the USSR. Italy had a land force of 1,340,000 effectives and an air force with nearly 2,500 combat aircraft. By mid-June 1941 Finland had increased its armed forces to 650,000 officers and men; it had 307 combat aircraft in its air force. Romania increased its armed forces to 703,000 officers and men; there were some 700 combat aircraft in its air force. The Hungarian army had somewhat over 200,000 officers and men; the Hungarian air force counted 269 combat aircraft.²

In the military-economic race forced upon the Soviet Union by the nazi aggressive bloc during the initial period of the Second World War, the former did all it could in the prevailing situation. The Soviet national income grew at a faster rate: compared with the 1937 level, in 1940 the national income of Germany increased by 25 per cent, while that of the USSR by 33 per cent.³

Soviet defence spending in 1940 reached the record proportion of 32.6 per cent.⁴

Headed by the Communist Party, the Soviet people readied their Armed Forces for resistance to aggression at the cost of colossal effort and material privation. But the USSR could not surpass nazi Germany's military-industrial potential, especially as now practically the whole of continental Europe had been harnessed by Germany. Almost all of the countries in the bloc headed by Germany had a mobilised war industry, vast raw material and adequate manpower resources. In history there is nothing to compare with the military and economic power concentrated in the hands of the Soviet Union's adversaries.

Awareness of the actual correlation of forces between the USSR and the nazi bloc on the eve of the Great Patriotic War

¹ D. Eichholtz, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

² *A History of the Second World War. 1939-1945*, Vol. 3, pp. 334-38.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

made it imperative for the Soviet leaders to do everything to stave off the Nazi aggression as long as possible.

In February 1941 Germany began a secret transfer of troops to the Soviet frontiers. The information received by the General Staff, the People's Commissariat for Defence, and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs made it clear that there was an increasing threat of aggression. Some information about Nazi Germany's preparations for an attack on the USSR was received by the Soviet government also from foreign sources, but it had to reckon with the fact that any information coming from the US and British governments was from countries that were pursuing imperialist aims and had repeatedly demonstrated their hostility towards the USSR.

In a talk with Winston Churchill in August 1942, J.V. Stalin said: "I did not need any warnings. I knew war would come, but I thought I might gain another six months or so."¹ Alexander Werth summed up his impressions of meetings with Soviet leaders, by saying that they were "fully aware of the danger of a German attack but still hoped that they could put off the evil hour—at least till the autumn when the Germans would not attack; and then by 1942, Russia would be better prepared for war".²

SOVIET DIPLOMACY CONTINUES THE STRUGGLE

Germany, its allies and satellites were moving towards aggression against the USSR. From December 1940 onwards the Third Reich's entire colossal machine stood restively poised. In Berlin there was no vacillation about the invasion. Soviet political counter-measures to Germany's hostile acts in the countries adjoining the USSR could no longer cardinal change the situation: the USSR's European neighbours in northwest and southwest had already become bridgeheads or accomplices in invasion, while the Polish bridgehead had been in existence since September 1939. Germany's political diktat and military strength denied alternatives to all the countries along the Soviet European frontiers,

¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. IV. Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1951, p. 443.

² Alexander Werth, *Russia at War. 1941-1945*, Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1964, p. 120.

while their ruling quarters, impelled by anti-Sovietism, did not look for an alternative, submitting to strength. Diplomacy's possibilities for putting off the commencement of aggression diminished drastically.

The negative consequences of the USSR's encirclement by capitalist countries, which restricted the opportunities of its foreign policy, came to light with particular clarity during the last months before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War. Nazi Germany intensified its anti-Soviet activities in Southeast Europe and other regions adjoining the Soviet Union's frontiers. Among these activities were the involvement of Bulgaria in the Tripartite Pact, the stationing of more German troops in Romania and Finland, the armed invasion of Yugoslavia a day after the signing of the Soviet-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression, and the intrusion by German aircraft into Soviet air space. The Soviet government protested strongly against these acts but avoided immediate confrontation. But the political struggle between the USSR and Germany was growing sharper.

For example, after the Soviet government had made a statement to Germany on January 17, 1941, through its embassy in Berlin, E. Weizsäcker, the State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry, wrote in his diary: "The Russian ambassador called on me today. He declared: 'The Soviet government has repeatedly stated to the German government that Bulgaria and the territory of the two straits are a security zone of the USSR and it (the USSR.—P.S.) cannot remain indifferent to developments that are endangering its security. Hence, the Soviet government deems it necessary to warn that it will regard the appearance of any foreign troops on the territory of Bulgaria and the two straits as a violation of the Soviet Union's security interests'."¹

A treaty of friendship and non-aggression was signed in Moscow by the USSR and Yugoslavia on April 5, 1941. Germany made it clear that it took a negative attitude towards this treaty. In reply ambassador von Schulenburg was told that this Germany's posture would have no effect on the Soviet Union's attitude to Yugoslavia. "The Soviet government has carefully considered its step and adopted a final decision."²

¹ J. W. Brügel, op. cit., p. 289.

² *Soviet Foreign Policy Archives*.

In February 1941 the Soviet embassy in Iran reported that nazi agents were actively engaged in efforts to turn Iran into a base for spying and subversion against the USSR, particularly key areas of the Soviet rear. Fascist associations had been formed in a number of Iranian towns situated near the Soviet frontier and also in Iranian ports on the Caspian-Pahlevi, Bandare Shah and others. Subversive groups were being trained there to be smuggled into the Baku oilfields and Soviet Turkmenistan.

From Kabul the Soviet embassy reported in early 1941 that German agents had stepped up their anti-Soviet activities in Afghanistan. The German colony was distributing propaganda leaflets and brochures designed to provoke anti-Soviet feeling among the Afghan population. More terrorist and subversive gangs were organised that attacked Soviet frontier posts and tried to smuggle German spies and wreckers into Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. It was particularly disturbing that fascist agents had established contact with White émigrés and also with *basmaches* (gangs of fanatics led by former landowners.—*Ed.*).¹

In Iran and Afghanistan Soviet diplomacy continued its efforts to weaken German influence in these countries.

Soviet policy in the Balkans and also North Europe was evidence of the Soviet Union's firm intention to continue defending the interests of small countries in the face of the fascist threat. Subsequently, on June 16, 1941, Milan Gavrilović, a former Yugoslav envoy in the USSR, assessed the situation as follows: "...the anti-Soviet activities which had been carried on secretly by Germany for a considerable time previously in Finland, the Baltic States, and the Ukraine had aroused increasing concern in Moscow... The Soviet Government endeavoured to impede German action in the Balkans by its assurance to Turkey, by its statements relative to Hungary and Bulgaria, and by the signature of the Non-Aggression Pact with Yugoslavia... The significance of these several incidents was not lost upon the German Government."²

Indeed, in Berlin they distinctly saw the anti-fascist thrust of Soviet foreign policy. Walter Schellenberg, a member of the German intelligence elite, recorded in his diary Hitler's assessment

of the situation given at a secret conference of the nazi leadership in April 1941. Hitler was quoted as saying that the Soviet Union's "claims" with regard to Finland, Bulgaria, and Romania and its political "intrigues" over the recent period in Yugoslavia showed that it would soon be ready for a showdown, in other words, that Stalin would soon be ready for war with Germany.¹

While such statements by Hitler reflected the actual aggravation of Soviet-German relations, they put the blame for this aggravation on the Soviet Union. Hitler was inventing "arguments" to justify the impending attack on the Soviet Union, referring to Soviet "aggressiveness" and its readiness to resort to a "preventive strike". These "arguments" were later used by some bourgeois historians to whitewash German aggression and misrepresent Soviet foreign policy. Serious researchers in the West have more than once denounced this juggling with facts. One of them, Barry A. Leach of Britain, notes that Hitler justified his decision to attack the USSR with the claim that there was increased hostility by the USSR towards Germany. "But the conflicts over Finland and Rumania in the second half of 1940 were mainly the outcome of Hitler's decision to attack Russia in 1941 and the changes of policy that attended it. Thus, the deterioration of Russo-German relations was far more the result than the cause of Hitler's decision to strike in the East."²

The strained relations between the USSR and Germany affected the bilateral contacts between them despite the "friendship" legend that was still being spread by the nazis. For instance, the German authorities raised the question of the transfer to Germany of persons of German origin residing in territories reunited with the Soviet Union in 1939-1940. The Soviet government gave its consent to the voluntary departure of such persons.

The Soviet Union protested to Germany time and again in connection with the increasingly frequent frontier incidents. The German military attache in Moscow Werner Tippleskirch reported to Berlin on April 22, 1941: "The Secretary General of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs summoned me to his office today and delivered to me a *note verbale*, in which the urgent

¹ Walter Schellenberg, *Memorien*, Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, Cologne, 1959, pp. 129-30.

² Barry A. Leach, *German Strategy Against Russia, 1939-1941*, p. 231.

¹ Ibid.

² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941*, Vol. I, 1956, pp. 312-13.

request is again made that we take measures against continuing violations of the boundary of the USSR by German planes. Violations had increased considerably of late. From March 27 to April 18, 80 such cases had occurred."¹

The Soviet embassy in Berlin made wide use of the bilateral contacts with Germany to rescue prominent anti-fascists, progressive scientists and writers, and leading personalities of the communist movement from the clutches of the Gestapo. A long struggle was waged, for example, for the release of Paul Langevin, a leading French physicist and a confirmed anti-fascist. This struggle was joined by Soviet diplomats in Vichy, France. As a result Jean-Richard Bloch, a prominent French writer and Communist, was also released. Staying in Moscow after his release Bloch did much to mobilise world opinion against nazism.

LAST WEEKS AND DAYS OF PEACE

At the end of March persistent rumours began to circulate in Berlin that Hitler had decided to attack the Soviet Union. Various dates were named: April 6, April 20, May 18 and, finally, June 22. The Soviet embassy kept Moscow informed of all these alarming signals. "Over a period of several months we at the embassy were able to observe how Germany was steadily taking steps that were obviously designed to prepare for operations on the Eastern Front," writes Valentin Berezhkov. "Information about these preparations reached us from various sources.

"First of all there were our friends in Germany itself. We knew that in various parts of the Reich and particularly in Berlin, anti-fascist groups like Die Rote Kapelle continued to function underground. Overcoming immense difficulties and at times risking their lives the German anti-fascists contrived to warn the Soviet Union of the danger that threatened it. They passed on important information about the preparations being made by the Germans for an attack on the USSR."²

At a conference of senior officials of the Soviet embassy in

Berlin in early May 1941 the ambassador, who had just returned from Moscow, told them of J. V. Stalin's opinion about the increased danger of Nazi aggression against the USSR. They were instructed to closely review all the available information on this matter.

A circumstantial report was compiled towards the end of May. Its main conclusion was that Germany had practically completed its preparations for an invasion of the Soviet Union and that the scale of these preparations left no doubt that troops and hardware had been massed. Documents indicated plainly that Germany was ready to attack the Soviet Union at any moment.

In this situation the CPSU Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars instructed the People's Commissariats for Defence and the Navy to accelerate the build up of the Armed Forces. As early as February 1941 the Soviet government had endorsed the plan for mobilisation into the Red Army.

On May 13, 1941, the Soviet General Staff ordered the transfer of 28 infantry divisions and four army administrations from interior to frontier districts. In early June almost 800,000 men were called from the reserves for re-training. All were assigned as reinforcements for the troops of the western military districts and fortified sectors near the frontier. This allowed bringing up to strength nearly 100 infantry divisions, some fortified sectors, air force units, and other troops. On June 14-19, 1941, the command of frontier districts was instructed to move front departments to field command posts in the period between June 21 and 25; on June 19 orders were received to camouflage aerodromes, army units, military installations and other objectives. But the planned mobilisation and organisational measures were not completed on account of a miscalculation in determining the time of the Nazi attack; besides, the country's economic possibilities did not allow them to be carried out in the time allocated by history.

"The political and state leaders in the country saw war coming and exerted maximum efforts to delay the Soviet Union's entry into it," Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevsky wrote in his memoirs. "This was a sensible and realistic policy.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XI, pp. 602-03.

² V. M. Berezhkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72; I. Koblyakov, "On the Way Home from Berlin. 1941", *International Affairs*, No. 5, 1970, p. 90.

Its implementation required above all, a skilful conduct of diplomatic relations with the capitalist countries, especially with the aggressors. . .

"The whole problem, in my opinion," he continues, "boiled down to the length of time we had to continue that policy. After all, Nazi Germany actually had made war preparations on Soviet borders quite openly, especially in the last month; that was exactly the time when we should have carried out a speedy mobilization and transferred border districts to a full war footing, building up strong and deep-lying defences. Stalin, who had immense influence on Soviet home and foreign policy, was evidently unable to seize the right moment. New and urgent decisions were needed, opening a new historical epoch in our lives, with maximum vigilance observed at the same time so as not to give the Nazis a pretext for accusing us of aggressiveness."¹

While exercising the utmost caution, the Soviet government used diplomatic means to make it more difficult for Germany to attack the Soviet Union. To this end, on June 14, 1941, the Soviet press published a TASS report stating that "Soviet quarters are of the opinion that there are no grounds for the rumours about Germany intending to denounce the pact and attack the USSR". This report, which was mainly a military-political sounding of Germany's immediate intentions, mirrored the Soviet government's striving to use every opportunity to put off the outbreak of war. However, there was no reaction from the German government—by now it considered that no explanations were necessary. Germany had completed its preparations for war and it could not be stopped by diplomacy.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to preserve peace the Soviet government tried once more to contact the German government in the evening of June 21. On instructions from the government V. M. Molotov invited ambassador von Schulenburg to discuss the state of Soviet-German relations. That same night, at 00.40 hours on June 22, the Soviet ambassador in Berlin was sent a telegramme with the content of Molotov's talk with von Schulenburg. The ambassador was instructed to meet with Ribbentrop or his deputy and raise the same questions.

This mission remained unfulfilled; a few hours later the German armed forces perfidiously invaded the Soviet Union.

¹ A. M. Vasilevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

CONCLUSION

Covering a span of a little less than two years, the initial period of the Second World War was the last stretch of time before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War. This was an extremely difficult time for the Soviet Union. In international relations, notably with regard to German fascism, there had to be maximum realism in assessing the balance of forces in the world.

The mounting threat from German fascism was complemented by the unrelenting anti-Soviet activities of Germany's imperialist adversaries, by the anti-Soviet thrust of almost all the countries situated around the USSR. In the Far East Japanese militarism was awaiting its hour for aggression. For the Soviet Union there were no calm and reliable political directions in international relations at the time. Danger was converging on it from practically everywhere.

Problems involved in the Soviet Union's security were tackled comprehensively by the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government in accordance with the dynamics of international developments and with account of the entire spectrum of factors determining the Soviet Union's relations with the two imperialist groups and with neighbouring countries. The strategy and tactics, the general foreign policy activity of the USSR, the methods and main guidelines of Soviet diplomacy in ensuring the USSR's security and strengthening its international position were directed towards the central aim of creating the international conditions enabling the Soviet people successfully to continue building socialism and actively prepare for defence against the imminent threat from world imperialism, notably from German fascism, which was its strike force.

Vigorously championing the interests of the Soviet people, Soviet foreign policy in 1939-1941 was the policy of the powerful socialist state which was based on the Leninist principles of proletarian internationalism and peaceful coexistence. In its international activity the Communist Party's point of departure was that the greatest contribution to the world revolutionary process consisted in strengthening the USSR as the main achievement and bulwark of the world proletariat. The efforts of the Communist Party and the Soviet government to consolidate the Soviet Union's international position and security were a major factor in achieving the main foreign policy objectives in 1939-1941 and over a longer term, chiefly in providing better conditions for repulsing fascist aggression during the Great Patriotic War.

The principal result of the Communist Party's activity in the field of foreign policy was that the Soviet Union's involvement in the Second World War was postponed and the possibility was given for further strengthening its defence capacity, expanding its military-industrial resources, and reorganising the work of the defence industry in the face of the imminent war. "However, some of the problems linked to the nation's defence were not solved. On account of the shortage of resources and the lack of time many of the planned measures were not carried out in full."¹ But it is also true that never before had the Soviet political and military leadership been faced with so many challenging problems, military problems in the first place, for whose solution there was so little time.

The results of Soviet foreign policy activity during the initial period of the Second World War are of colossal significance in terms of the historical perspective as well. The USSR, a developed socialist society now building communism, exists within the state frontiers that were ensured chiefly in 1939-1940.

During the first years following the establishment of the Soviet government, the imperialist powers took advantage of young Soviet state's weakness to impose predatory arrangements relative to its European frontiers. In 1939-1940 this historical injustice was redressed. The peoples of Western Byelorussia, the Western Ukraine, Bessarabia, and Northern Bukovina were reunited

¹ *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy. 1917-1980, Vol. 1, 1917-1945*, Moscow, 1980, p. 417 (in Russian).

with the peoples of the USSR. The victory of the revolutionary forces in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia was of immense significance. The peoples of these countries found salvation from capitalist oppression in uniting with the USSR. The Soviet Union thereby discharged an internationalist duty to the entire revolutionary process.

The immutability of the existing state frontiers of the USSR is recorded in bilateral treaties between the USSR and socialist countries, between the USSR and the FRG, and between Poland and the FRG, and also in the series of agreements on West Berlin, and the treaty on the basis of relations between the GDR and the FRG. Lastly, this is confirmed by the Final Act of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation. By that act the foreign policy activity of the USSR in ensuring the security of its western frontiers was recognised finally and completely by all 35 nations that took part in the conference. This was confirmation that the foreign policy activity of the Soviet Union was effective on the eve of the Great Patriotic War.

The Soviet Union's persistent and vigorous actions were the main factor in preventing in 1939-1941 the consolidation of the imperialist camp on an anti-Soviet basis. The foreign policy of the Communist Party saved the Soviet people from a war against combined forces of imperialism. This was one of the cardinal results of Soviet foreign policy during that period.

Nazi Germany's adversaries in the West gradually came round to the realisation that cooperation with the USSR in the struggle against fascism was vital to them. Soviet foreign policy contributed to the failure of the Munich policy of the ruling quarters in Britain, France, and also in the USA, all of which were seeking to resolve the internal contradictions of the imperialist system at the expense of the USSR. The events of 1939-1941 dramatically demonstrated the danger of the policy of encouraging and inciting aggressive forces to attack the USSR, of playing all sorts of "anti-Soviet cards" to this end. The strategy of "appeasing" the fascist aggressors boomeranged catastrophically for its architects.

By foiling the many attempts of the Anglo-French coalition and the USA to provoke the USSR into a clash with Nazi Germany prematurely, Soviet foreign policy brought London, Paris, and Washington round to understanding that such cooperation

would not be achieved by bringing pressure to bear on the USSR or trying to make a deal with Hitler behind its back. The ruling quarters in Britain, France and the USA learned one more lesson of 1939-1941, namely, that their attempts to use the USSR in their imperialist interests were invariably cut short and led not only to a deterioration of their relations with the USSR but also to a deterioration of their overall international positions. All this provided important prerequisites for the creation of the anti-Hitler coalition in the future and showed that Soviet policy was correct.

The Soviet Union's entry into the war as a result of the Nazi invasion was the decisive factor completing the process of turning the Second World War into a just war of liberation.

Fascism's defeat, in which the decisive role was played by the Soviet Union, triggered a powerful wave of socio-political changes that swept across the entire planet and strengthened the forces of peace world-wide.

In the situation obtaining in those years no policy was possible save that pursued by the Soviet Union from the very first day of the Second World War. It was consistent with the vital interests not only of the Soviet people but also of the peoples of other countries. "Our Party foresaw the possibility of a military clash with the forces of imperialism and had been preparing the country and the people for defence. The socio-economic achievements gained during the prewar five-year plans and the ideological and political unity of Soviet society won in the building of socialism predetermined our people's victory in the Great Patriotic War."¹

The prehistory of the Second World War bears out the cardinal point that war must be fought long before it breaks out. The disunity and weakness of the anti-war forces in the West allowed the Nazis to start the war. This is a very important lesson calling all of the world's progressive forces for vigilance, unity, and an active struggle against war.

The present international situation differs fundamentally from the situation before the war. Imperialism can neither cancel socialism's gains nor halt the advance of the progressive forces, the movement for the liberation and independence of peoples.

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, p. 22.

The peoples of Europe have been living in peace for nearly 40 years. The historic changes in the alignment of social forces, the development and perfection of qualitatively new weapons of mass destruction as a result of the scientific and technological revolution have given an entirely new dimension to the problem of war and peace and enabled the CPSU and the international communist movement to draw the conclusion that it is possible and objectively necessary to prevent another world war.

Nor has anything been lost of the significance of the other lessons of international relations and Soviet foreign policy of the period of 1939-1941.

The most important of these is that there is a pressing need for consistent and timely opposition by all countries interested in preserving peace to any manifestations of aggressive policy, which in our day are fraught with an incomparably greater threat than those which led to the Second World War. To an equal extent this applied to the need for the participation of the masses in foreign-policy decisions—not after war breaks out but as active and conscious fighters for the prevention of war.

Another major lesson to be learned from the events of 40 years ago is that a split in the ranks of the peace forces is disastrous, that these forces must unite in the great cause of struggle for peace despite differences in their approach to other matters.

Lastly, today, as on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Union's Leninist foreign policy of peace, in which the defence of its state and class interests is organically combined with humane concern for the interests of all mankind, is a factor of paramount significance for a successful struggle to prevent war. While resolutely resisting aggressive policies, the Soviet Union is consistent in its efforts to ease international tension, end the arms race, eliminate the seats of war danger, and ensure the triumph of the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence.

The meaningful work of the CPSU and the Soviet state in implementing the historic Peace Programme of the 24th and 25th Congresses of the CPSU is striking evidence of the awareness by the Soviet Union of its growing role and internationalist duty in the new historical conditions and, moreover, convincingly bears out the continuity of its Leninist foreign policy of peace.

The 26th Congress of the CPSU creatively enlarged upon the Peace Programme to bring it into line with the current interna-

tional situation and advanced a series of new proposals. All the Soviet initiatives are permeated with the striving to end the present aggravation of international relations, advance towards a deepening of detente and the adoption of practical measures to limit the arms race.

Now, as before, the preservation of peace is the central foreign policy aim of the CPSU and the Soviet state. Taking the lessons of the Second World War into account, the Soviet Union is sparing no effort to prevent a repetition of that tragedy. The USSR is determined to do everything to exclude war from the life of humanity for all time.

To the imperialist doctrine of aggression and war the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet state counterpose the tested doctrine of peace, peaceful coexistence, and equality of all nations, big and small.

In this context the words said by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Konstantin Chernenko sound extremely topical: "When it comes to the security of peoples, foreign policy, diplomacy, can do a lot. But not everything. In the world arena, there are also political forces to whom goodwill is alien and who are deaf to the voice of reason. And here the restraining might of our defence potential plays an irreplaceable role. Today it is not only a guarantor of the Soviet people's creative labour, but also a guarantor of universal peace".¹

¹ *Pravda*, May 29, 1984.